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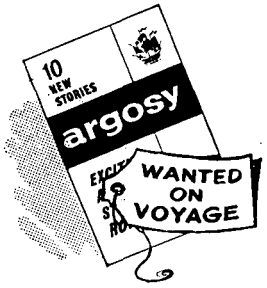

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argosy

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Acknowledgments are due for permission to reprint copyright material by the following authors: to Chatto and Windus for the extract from Daisy Ashford; to "The Countryman" for the extract from John T. Cantlay; to The Cresset Press for the extract from Keith West; to Laurence Pollinger Ltd., the Estate of the late Mrs. Frieda Lawrence, and Heinemann for the poem from "The Collected Poems of D. H. Lawrence"; to Hutchinson for the extract from E. and M. A. Radford; to Michael Joseph for the extract from H. E. Bates' "Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal"; to Methuen for the poem from "The Best of Dorothy Parker"; to the Proprietors of Punch for B. J. Pendlebury's poem; to the Society of Authors and the Literary Trustees of Walter de la Mare for the poem from "Peacock Pie"; to the Society of Authors and Jonathan Cape for A. E. Housman's "Loveliest of Trees" from "Collected Poems."

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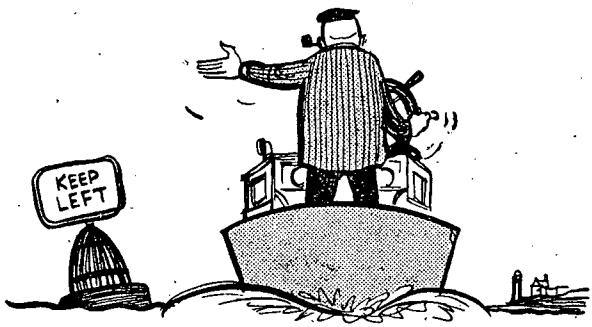

Log Book

HORATIO'S Canadian nephew Archie, over here on a visit, recently turned up at the office, and old Uncle Horatio offered to lend him his sloop, *The Saucy Mrs. Larkin*, on condition he take it round from Whitstable to Poole, where he plans to stay with his Auntie Floss. What could be better? To see the romantic old Cinque Ports and the wine-dark English Channel, with no tickets to book or landladies to bother . . .

Archie started right away studying Horatio's copy of the *Pilot's Guide to the English Channel*, and quickly discovered the fact that buoys can be conical, can, spherical, pillar, spar, wreck, beacon, staff, globe, diamond, or triangle. He thought lightships sounded a bit complicated, with their occulting lights, so he skipped them and went on to tides.

" Did you know," he asked old Uncle Horatio, " that from new moon to first quarter the crest of the solar wave will be to the west of the lunar wave and that high water will be earlier than if it were due to the moon's influence alone? " It was news to Archie that a lunar wave even *existed*. " How do you recognise it? " he asked. " The book doesn't say."

" Arr," grunted Horatio, " it's just a matter of experience."

Passing over Mean High Water Neaps and the hinge of the tide (he didn't know tides had hinges either), he then read out to us the directions for entering the harbour of Ramsgate, where he had decided to spend the night:

" Without local knowledge or pilot's assistance, vessels are *not recommended* to enter Ramsgate harbour at night . . . If a vessel is not very quick with her helm she will be set on shore . . . From the Small Downs keep the light on Deal pier astern

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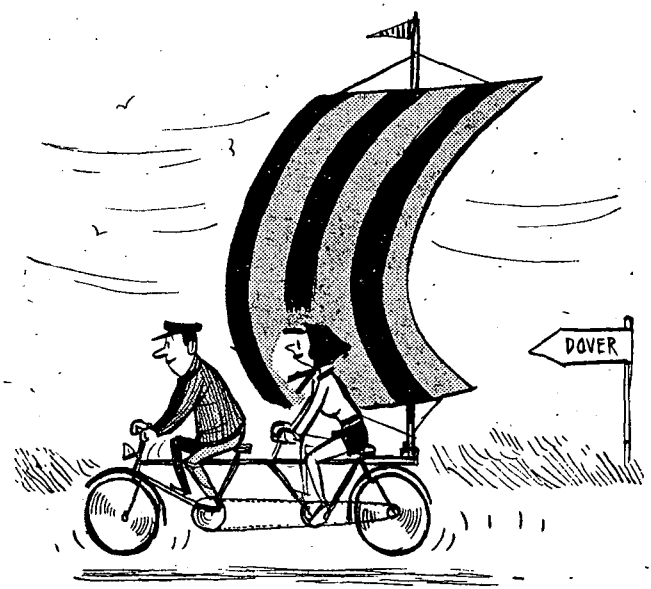
bearing 185° true (S 15° W) S by W¼W Mag until the eastern pair of leading lights at Ramsgate are about in line, red occulting on the East pier and green on the East cliff. Steer for these, then edge to the westward on a bearing of 346° true (N 3° W) N¼W Mag . . ." This seemed a bit too much altogether—" And what Mag ? " he asked Uncle Horatio. "Argosy or Yachting World ? " He decided to skip Ramsgate, and after he had read the remarks about the tide rip and the detached Mole at Dover he decided to skip Dover too; something about the Mole's detachment seemed to dismay him. He licked his finger, turned the page, and went on to the Goodwins . . .

" These sands are extensive and extremely dangerous . . .

" Hey," he said, " if they're so all-fired dangerous, what are all those red-and-white cans doing on the sands? People don't picnic there, do they? And why are the wireless phones for life-saving only? Suppose you go aground? "

" You wait for the next lunar wave," said Horatio. He took his tobacco-jar out of the filing cabinet. " Don't forget to watch for the artillery range at Dungeness . . ."

Archie, rather pale by now, was reading about Fogs and Mirages (frequent in the Channel.) We weren't very surprised when we heard that, after all, he had decided to get a girlfriend to join him and gipsy off to the Cinque Ports on a bicycle made



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for two. Argosy, he found, fits into a rucksack just as well as into a duffelbag.

We began to wonder if there are any contemporary shanties to match today's conditions, and yesterday when Horatio began to do the office springcleaning we heard him singing, under his breath, something like this:

I'll sing you a song of a conical sphere
Edge to the eastaway, edge to the westaway O
Steer for the occulting red, me boys, steer,
Quick with your helm, lad—or else you suggestaway O

Don't get snapped up in the hinge of the tide
Edge to the eastaway, edge to the westaway O
Wild calls the Mean Neap, and won't be denied
Sail up! and off on the next lunar crestaway O

Who left my Argosy out on the binnacle?
Edge to the eastaway, edge to the westaway O
Abaft, o you sailormen salty and cynical
Archie's ashore where I think he is bestaway O

JOHN SILVER

Horatio

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FISHERMAN'S WIFE

Gathering her skirts, the tiny yawl
flew for the harbour apron

BY WILFRED McNEILLY

DEAD and grey and cold lay the fish on the kitchen table between them and their love like it. The living, subtle shimmer had gone from both.

" A fisherman's wife! "

Matthew Thompson laughed harshly, and Maire knew that she had never seen him before. The long, lean lines of his face had hardened into the oak of the frames of the *Little Lady* and the east wind was cold in his eye.

" I will tell you a thing," he said, and it was not his courting voice she heard now but the blended Scots-Irish of the County Down, hardened by the sea to call through a hurricane. " And this thing I have from my mother. For in the days before there was a harbour here at the port, when I was a babby and my da' living, then the boats had to lie off in the bay moored to those buoys you can see from the windows there. They were not the big boats we have now but wee, small yawls, the like of Willy John's that he uses at the lobsters. Even so they were too big to draw up on the shore, forbye the shore is rocks and would have had them destroyed."

Maire did not move. Under the twists and curls of her black, black hair her blue eyes searched his face.

" The boats moored off," he said, and there was a strange, almost exultant tone to his voice. " And in the mornings when the men went to their fishing, the women came down to the shore with them, hail, rain, or snow. And each woman would take up her man on her back and she would wade out to his boat, with the water maybe abune her oxters.

" She would set him aboard there and him with his clothes dry so that there would be some comfort in him at the start of his fishing. And then she would go to her work, to gather bait and mend lines and hawk fish about the doors."

His eyes glowed as he recalled a past he had never known. Then a curl came to his lip.

" That was what it was to be a fisherman's wife in those days,"

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he said, bending towards her. "And you—you, by God, will not clean a fish for my tea."

There was the pound of his fist on the table. Then there was the slam of the door. The little red geranium she had brought from home trembled an instant upon the windowsill. Then it crashed to the floor.

She had been dumb and numb and not believing, but the flower's fall was a wakener. The stiffness sagged out of her back and she crumpled into the chair.

Maire had been married just three weeks and the world was at an end.

There was no sobbing in her sorrow, only a silent, enveloping ache that did not know where the pain first started. She did not hear the outer door open or the kitchen door.

A hand fell lightly on her shoulder and she straightened and turned in quick hope that died as it was born.

The tall, gaunt woman who was Matthew's mother still wore the black of her widowhood, though it was twenty years old now. Her face seemed of granite, hewn by sorrow and toil and stress to an unyielding mask. She spoke rarely.

Even before the wedding Maire had dreaded her. Had she not taken her only son? Since the wedding Maire had scarcely seen her. Now, surely, was the moment of her triumph. For if Matthew's words had proved anything they had proved he was his mother's son, admiring her, worshipping her even, comparing other women with her. What hope had the girl?

"I saw Matthew go out, a raging in his step."

"Yes."

Stiff and wary, Maire waited for defeat.

"The door slammed hard behind him."

"Yes."

No loophole, Maire told herself. No weakness. No opening for the lever that would prise them apart—if they were not utterly apart now.

"He broke your little plant, the lovely thing."

Unwillingly Maire's eyes came up to meet the older woman's, drawn there by a break in the flatness of her voice.

"It—fell," said Maire.

There came a choke into her voice, brought not by thought of the plant's destruction but by the look she saw in the widow's eyes. Not triumph there, not bitterness, but the last thing she had expected: sympathy.

It broke down the armour she had built, and the tears were too strong to hold back any more.

The widow's fingers were gentle as they ruffled through

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Maire's hair. "There, there, my lassie, there," she crooned. "Water in the eye is like water in a boatie. You're well rid of it."

Then briskly at last she rose. "A wee cup of tea and a big talk is what we're needing."

The tea she made was black and strong and a loosener of tongues. Maire talked.

In spurts of words and silences that said almost more than the words, she told her husband's mother of her marriage. It had been too big a change from the city to the port—the ancient port with its seaways and its landways and its twisted sullen suspicion of the foreigner within its gates.

For Maire was a foreigner. Though the city was only thirty miles away, it was another land, another world in mind and deed.

"And Matthew at sea all day," she said. "No one to explain—"

"I should have come in," Matthew's mother reproached herself. "But a mother-in-law is a wanchancy beast in a young bride's home. No matter. That will be different. A lot will be different. Now you will tell me how you fought. What you said and what he said and all the rest. Then, when he comes back with the drink buzzing in him—for that is the way of the men of the port—then you and I will give his ears such a dirling—"

"It—it was maybe not all his fault," Maire said softly.

"Wheesht, girl, never admit such a thing. Did he come striding in with his fish-stinking oilskins or the fifty-fathom mud clabbering his seaboots?"

"It was the fish," said Maire. "I—I never cleaned a fish before."

To thrust a knife into flesh that still bore the semblance of life instead of the pallid anonymity of fish from a shop, that was what had stayed her.

To Maire's surprise, Mrs. Thompson nodded understanding. "I was scunnered the same myself, once," she confessed, "the first day I had a chicken to dress. They are hard to do, these things, when you do them for the first and if you think of them at all. But there is no life without death and usage makes easy. I will show you the way of it and I do not think you will turn again."

As the older woman's deft fingers ran a keen blade through the fish, the rest of the story was coaxed from Maire.

"Ha!" The knife blade flashed in a wild gesture. "He talked of the old days and the hard days, did he, and I to blame. For with his father dead I had the boy to rear, and a mother makes a poor father. So I told him tales of the old days so that he would

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have a respect for women and what they could do. I never thought of this."

Her lips tightened and almost absentmindedly she pulled the skin from the fish with easy jerks that left the flesh clean and white and untorn.

"The old days! He to talk of the old days and him never in a boat less than fifty feet long with Diesel engines and glowing galley fires and all the comforts of the world. The old days! The boy to ettle for the old days!"

She laid the knife down and four white fillets beside it.

"In the deep fat is the best way to fry them," she said. "But you need not bother for him this night, for with the drink he will not be wanting food when he comes in. The old days, so. I have the thought, girl dear, that there is a boyo needing a lesson."

Matthew was not drunk when he came home but he was not sober either, and his temper trembled on an edge between truculence and abject apology. It was an extra irk that Maire was already in bed and, to all seeming, asleep. There was nothing for it but to turn in, clattering his boots a little in the hope of waking her.

He slept heavily and woke sourly with the sun beating on his eyes. That brought him from the blankets with a rush.

"You've let me sleep in," he accused loudly.

Maire was not there to hear him.

Bewildered, he rushed about the little house. His heart was cold and he found but one grain of comfort. There was no note. Surely they always left a note.

There was no time to cook or even snatch a sup of tea. He pulled on seaboots, gathered up his oilskin, and hurried for the harbour, almost running through the winding, cobbled streets. The *Little Lady* was waiting and in her five men who would be wanting to make a day's wages.

Anger began to burn up in him again. There would be sly jokes on the boat, hints about newly-wed husbands who found it hard to leave their beds. It was Maire's fault. His mother had never let him sleep in.

Annie Mary Connolly, curlers still in her hair and yesterday's gossip fresh still in her mind, saw him hurry past and wondered.

Matthew saw nothing as he stumped his way down the quay to the *Little Lady*'s berth. His muddled anger blinded him to everything. So much so that he had stooped to clamber down the iron ladder into the boat before he noticed one vital factor.

The *Little Lady* was not there.

His boat had sailed without him.

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It was bewildering, inconceivable. His gaze blundered round the harbour, seeking the boat's familiar lines. Had they gone for oil? For ropes?

"Willy John has taken her." His mother's voice came from just behind.

"Willy John? What right had he to do that?"

"Because I told him to. Skipper of the *Lady* you might be, but I'm the owner."

When he looked at his mother he knew he had never seen her before. This woman was iron. This was the woman strangers knew.

"You're to take Willy John's yawl."

"Me? The yawl?"

Yawls were only toys now, playthings for the children and the retired, not for fishing, real fishing.

Yet all his protests died unsaid.

"You're to follow me."

And almost meekly he did, down the rocky foreshore of the bay. The old yawl, built when his father's father was a lad, rocked at the buoy. Nineteen feet long, double-ended, it was built on the pattern that the Vikings had brought to that coast a thousand years before. Even its name was Norse, though that he did not know.

"This is foolishness," he complained. "Me in a yawl."

"You're to take it and to fish it."

There was complete finality in his mother's voice.

"I'll get a punt and bring her in," he sighed, bowing to the cold madness of the day.

"You'll need no punt," his mother said.

Now Maire was walking down the beach. She looked ten years old in an old gansey of his and old jeans turned up at the bottom and her feet bare and blue, for the morning was cold.

"Bend down, girl," his mother said.

No. Matthew's mind howled in silent protest. She doesn't mean it. She can't mean it.

"Get on her back."

"I'll not do it."

Already there were children gathering, not understanding but knowing here was something rich and rare.

"A fisherman's wife you wanted, son. A fisherman's wife you'll have."

Maire turned and her eyes met Matthew's. She saw in them all the same fears and dreads she had known herself. She saw a boy and a man struggling together with the fear of ridicule hanging over both. She straightened.

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"No. Don't make him do it."

But this was between a mother and her son.

"You would break a decent girl's heart with your ranting of times past and your foolish pride in the things you never knew. I will tell you, son, there was no pride in our men's heart that they had to make their wives beasts of burden. But they had it to do and they did it so their own bodies might be fit for their work—work you have never known for its time was past before you grew.

"But it is work you will do this day, my son. You will get on that girl's back and you will go out to that yawl and you will fish her or, as God is my witness, you are no son of mine and will fish no boat of mine."

In that moment it was in Matthew's heart to throw down the oilskin and stride up the beach and out of the port for ever.

His eyes met Maire's, the little city girl he had brought into the midst of this strange turmoil. He remembered his first shy meeting when he had been the awkward sailor and she the kindly guide through the maze of a city dance. He remembered nights in the moonlight and tenderness and hope. He had brought her to this. He could not leave her to it. It was a bullet he had made and he must bite on it.

For a moment the muscles stood out along the lean line of his jaw. He stepped to Maire's side.

"Bend down, girl," he said huskily. "And I am sorry."

The crowd was gathering swiftly, coming from every side, children and women and men. Some watched from behind seafront curtains. All watched this strangeness on the shore.

Mrs. Thompson was a black tower of silence.

Then it was a great wonder to them all as the slip of a girl took her husband on her back. Matthew was all bone and sinew but there was much of that and surely the girl would break.

Maire staggered once, to an indrawn gasp of breath that sighed along the shore. Then she fought her feet into the water and deeper, sliding sometimes on the weed. Men swayed and staggered every step with her, not moving from their places but feeling the bite of barnacle and sharp rock edge at each pace.

And when she reached the boat there was another sigh along the shore, an easing and a straightening of backs.

Matthew was dry when he pulled himself into the yawl.

For an instant he held her.

"This was for you," he said.

"For us," she answered.

And the water was less cold as she waded shorewards. She did not feel the sharpness underfoot.

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Annie Mary Connolly still wore her curlers, as they did not fail to cast up to her later. Blowsy and panting, she darted this way and that way, scratching like a hen for every grain of what had happened, raging at herself because she had come too late.

To Maire she darted as the girl came dripping from the water.

"Oh woman dear, you'll have your death. Oh, the foolishness and vanity of men. Oh, what a thing to do on a poor young lass . . ."

For Maire she was not there, unseen, unheard. The gossip darted to the mother, still, withdrawn.

"What does it mean?" she cried. "Now Mrs. Thompson, tell me what it means."

Even Annie Mary should have understood the cold contempt in the widow's eyes.

"A man has gone to his fishing," she said. "That is all."

She turned then and took Maire's arm and they walked up from the shore, a fisherman's mother and a fisherman's wife.

Four hundred miles away an announcer sat in a news studio.

"Here is a gale warning," he said. "Irish Sea, Fair Isle, Rockall. Attention all shipping in those areas . . ."

Matthew stepped the mast in the old boat and hoisted the faded, brown-tanned lugsail. It bellied into straining life as he sheeted it home. The little yawl heeled and stirred.

Only one look he threw at the shore and the scattering crowd. One long bewildered look that softened slowly into a smile.

His head threw back and he slapped his thigh with a great blow and he laughed. "What a woman—ah, what a woman!"

And even in his own mind he was not clear which he meant.

He was whistling as he tacked out past the pierhead, a lilting old tune of the Mournes that he could see now raising their black mass from the sea to the south.

Now he gazed at the gear he must fish, the long line coiled in its skip in the bottom of the boat. There were five hundred hooks on the line, each hook with its separate yard-long snood to the main line, each hook baited neatly with a chunk of herring. The bait covered the barb of the hook and the bend so that when the line ran out there would be nothing to catch and foul and snarl up the gear.

There were hours of work in the baiting of a line and he wondered who had done it. Had it been Maire? Those little soft fingers . . . He cursed himself.

"But this was what you wanted, Matthew boy. You've got it."

And now he began to study his gear. For this of the long lines had died long before, so long ago that it was a wonder to him where his mother had found the gear.

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Nets had killed the long lines, trawlers and seiners, dragging and scraping the sea bottom so it was a wonder a fish still lived. Matthew was a seiner. But he was a fisherman, too.

And the gear was simple enough in truth. There was the line and the two anchors to it and the buoy with its strop. The gear would be no problem if he could find the fish.

The rough ground, he thought, the boat close-hauled into the south-easterly wind. The rough ground will be the only place. Ballynahinch Rough.

There, where great rocks and gullies strewed the bottom, no nets could fish. It was untouched. If there were fish they would be good fish, turbot and brill and maybe even halibut, pricey fish in any market, not like the poor whiting and cod and haddock whose fecundity was their only reason for survival, whose price rose and fell like a barometer of landings.

The rough ground was, too, the meeting place of the tides and no abode for a little old boat whose builder's bones had mouldered this half century or more. Of this Matthew did not think. There was a thrill in his blood now.

" I'll show her," he said.

And again he did not know if it was his mother he meant or his wife . . .

From the kitchen they could see the little brown sail, a dancing autumn leaf across the sea.

Maire did not know what it was she felt now as she looked out through the window, whether it was pride that Matthew was doing this for her, a tenderness for him and a pity, or whether it was the sudden gift of freedom that the port had given her. She was of the port now, as much a part of it as any ancient slab upon the causeway. That morning she had moved into the port's history.

" Mother . . ."

This was the first time she had said the word to the widow and she felt the sudden rightness of it.

Only when she turned did she see tears in Mrs. Thompson's eyes. They rolled unchecked down her cheeks.

" To shame him in front of all," she murmured. " To make a mock of him. What have I done? What have I done? "

Maire felt a thousand years old as her arm went about the other's shoulder. From some unknown well of instinct she could divine what Matthew's mother must feel.

" You did what you had to do," she said.

She laughed suddenly and softly. " Matthew will be having the time of his life."

Matthew was swearing as men do when their delight exceeds

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all bounds, ranting and raving and cursing at each flapping, fat-thick body that he freed from the hook and threw to join the others on the floor.

"Can I not fish?" he asked the sky. "Man, I will show them."

Turbot and brill and the first halibut he had seen in seven years.

"Oh you hellion, you bitch, you beautiful she-cat," he saluted the last turbot on the line. "You beautiful, beautiful bastards. Oh *can* I fish now?"

The killing greed that comes on a fisherman had him fast and there was no sense left in him. He began to cut bait, to cut up the one dogfish that had been on the line. But baiting a line is one job on the shore. It is another when a boat pitches and reels, when fish flap and kick and foul the line, when the clouds darken in the south-east and the glass begins to drop.

This was pure folly and the defiance of all sense . . .

His mother's eyes had dried now but her face was pale and hard. Maire poured more tea.

"You mustn't worry," she said. "He'll be all right."

She had pride and confidence in her man, in his strength and his judgment. But she did not know the sea. And she did not know a fisherman who is killing fish. Her heart was easy, while the mother paced up and down in mounting fear.

"That boat. That little rotten old boat. I sent him out in it."

"We sent him," Maire answered, proud in her new serenity, knowing that he had gone for her sake, and gentle too, wanting to take the guilt from the old woman's shoulders. "And he will be all right."

"What do you know of it?"

The sharpness died at once from the mother's tongue.

"I'm sorry. But the wind in the south-east—and rising. Pray God he got no fish, lassie, for he will be on the rough ground and if he is killing fish he will not move. It will be in his mind that he will show us, he will prove he is a fisherman. He will wipe out this morning's memory with such a catch as no one ever saw before. And he will kill himself to do it."

The cold certainty in the mother's voice at last struck a chill into Maire's heart.

The line had fouled.

Shooting it as he drifted down before the wind, Matthew saw two hooks catch deep into the coiled line. They would drag the whole mass in a tangle of cordage over the side.

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Instinctively a hand flashed out to free the hooks and this no true liner would ever do, though they had a saying in the old days that a man did not learn to work a line till he had lost two fingers.

This was more folly. The line rose as he snatched at it and the hooks seemed to take on an independent malevolent life. Pain stabbed suddenly in half a dozen places as the three-inch hooks bit deep.

Even as sense came back to him, Matthew felt himself dragged towards the gunwale's edge. He was hooked in the hand twice, in the leg, on the chest, and even in the ear.

The line strained taut. There was a fifty-pound weight at its end, dragging now slowly through the weed and rock far below.

Matthew threw himself down to get a purchase with his shoulder against the side. Even so, he was being dragged tighter and tighter up against the side, being pulled over it.

The flaming pain of the hooks was forgotten. Now there was greater danger.

With a slap and a hiss a wave broke half over the boat.

The heavy line, made to hold any fish that ever swam the sea, was anchoring the boat. And it was anchoring it almost beam on. It was anchoring it through the hooks that drove deeper and deeper into his body.

He tried to reach for his knife. He was held too firmly. He tried to rub the line back and forward across the gunwale, to fray it till it broke. Gunwale it was that frayed first.

The only help he got was by edging backwards to the stern.

Still he was held. Still he could not reach his knife. But the line that thrummed down past his aching eyes was leading sternward now. The boat was held by her stern, held through his screaming flesh. But at least that sharp stern met the waves. No more would break aboard. The Norsemen had designed well . . .

Down on the harbour they were beginning to gather, little groups of two and three, apart and yet together as they gazed out into the greyness that had come across the sea.

" It's force six now and it'll go to eight."

This was a sea that Maire had not known existed, sullen, vicious, gathering up its strength. The mother's lips were trembling as she stood at the girl's side, tall and black and silent.

How often had she stood like this in the old days? Maire wondered.

" I brought you some tea in a flask."

Annie Mary was the gossip no more; not now.

Evening was shadowing down. They could see the distant

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blinks of a starboard light. On the radio the mother had called Willy John and sent the *Little Lady* to the rough ground. Other boats would have heard. They would be converging on the area.

But could they be in time?

The line had slapped three times across Matthew's face, scoring it, before he understood its message.

And then, for the last time that day, he laughed. Here was joy and humour in the midst of peril. Here was a jest to share when the chance once came—if it did.

Matthew's strong white teeth began to bite into the straining line, nibbling it strand by strand . . .

The harbour radio crackled and spat and hissed but Willy John's voice was clear enough. " I dinny see him oan the rough ground. I'm doubting he is more over to the east. I am taking her a turn that way."

Slow and solid and reassuring his voice. But the little group in the harbourmaster's office knew what he meant.

" He's gone."

The mother's voice was just above a whisper. There was a sort of edging away from the Thompson women, as if in the presence of death.

" No." Maire's voice was strong. " He's all right. He must be."

Eyes that could pierce drawn shutters to tell the pattern of the wallpaper had no difficulty with the dusk. " There's a boat . . . a boat . . . a boat! "

They looked where Annie Mary pointed, a narrowing of eyes all along the quay. There was just a rag of sail, brown against the white of the following crests. Maire shut her eyes. It was not possible that a thing so small should live in that solemn turbulence.

" The sweet wee boatie, good wee boatie," crooned the mother. " Oh, the lovely boatie."

" He's deep—oh he's deep. Her garboards must be sprung."

" Yon's not water in him, for it would be rollicking like springtime. He has fish."

Maire was trembling. This was a thing most terrible to see, that old rotten boat rising from each hollow, borne forward for long instants on the bosom of each wave, out of control until the wave passed on. The crouched figure at the stern saw nothing, felt nothing but the boat beneath and the wave astern.

" He'll not get by the pierhead, not with the wind setting him across."

Was Maire to see the boat smashed finally there in the white maelstrom beneath her?

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Go back, she wanted to cry. Keep clear.

And she wanted to leap into the living water and go to him.

Above all she wanted to waken, to make this a dream.

Her fault . . . her fault . . . her fault . . .

Matthew knew he could not go back. Even if the boat could have stood it, he had no strength left to take the sea.

The faces along the wall were just a row of white dots in the one quick upward glance he took. Yet he fancied he could recognise Maire's and there was a swelling of pride in his heart.

The lean, clean lines of the old boat left no wake and this had been her saving, for a wake makes a sea break. But now everywhere the seas were breaking, thrust back off the pier, tumbled by the Sudden Rock at the other side of the entrance.

There was only one way through, the way they had taken in the old days. If his mother had it right; if his memory was right.

" He's on the wall."

It was like a groan running from mouth to mouth as the little yawl gathered up her skirts and flew for the broad apron that lay beneath the outer wall.

Surely she would run up there and be dashed again and again against the unforgiving granite.

But in the old days, when the yawls were going out and the motors coming in, they had known the way of the waters there.

When a wave struck the apron it licked upwards and then fell back to form a new current that sucked round the end of the pier.

A boat could ride that current—if she found it.

The yawl's bow seemed to reach for the rocks before she gybed. Maire could look down into it, see the fish and the tangled line and Matthew straining hard across against the tiller.

And in this moment it was her helplessness that bit deepest. She could have been a hundred miles away and more and help as much.

This, she knew, it was this that it was to be a fisherman's wife. This final helplessness . . .

Then with a clap the sail filled on the gybe and the yawl rode the current tightly round the pier's foot and a moment later she was in smooth water.

" He is going for the bay."

All along the pier they were running, making for the shore, racing to be there first, to lay a hand and help to hold the boat and lift her fish ashore.

And now they were laughing and gay and a song started somewhere.

Matthew tacked twice off the shore until he saw that Maire was

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there. Then he headed in and freed the lanyard and brought the brown sail tumbling down in weary folds.

A hundred hands would have reached for the boat as she grounded.

But the mother stopped them.

"No," she called, with the iron in her voice again. "Let her. It is her right."

It was Maire's hand that held the boat an instant and then went out to Matthew's bloody, aching body.

He forced a smile.

"Wait now," he said. "Until we get the fish ashore."

"Of course," she said. "The fish."

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argosy

next month . . .

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a new Geordie adventure

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MICHAEL GILBERT

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The Impostors:

MR. WARREN

by

GERALD SPARROW

THERE is more than one way of robbing a bank, even a bank so hedged with security and immersed in prestige as the Bank of England. Even in 1873 there was a feeling among the criminal élite that it should be possible to obtain money from the banks painlessly by fraud instead of by violence.

This conviction was held most strongly by four American gentlemen who visited London in the spring of that year taking for themselves a suite at a famous hotel where they could plot in peace undisturbed by vulgar intrusion. For the Bidwell brothers were men of peace. They were also men of real ability. They were not petty thieves. They were criminals, yes, but they were criminals in the grand manner. Nothing less than a fortune interested them, the bigger the fortune the better. They and their associates had just completed a lucrative trip on the Continent and they thought that London in the spring sunshine, amiable, easy-going old London, was just the town in which to linger for a time; not for too long of course, for about eighty-five days, just before a three-month bill of exchange became due for payment.

It was typical of the Bidwell brothers that when they contemplated robbing a bank, they at once thought of the Bank of England. It was the top bank, and they were the top men in their profession, so it was in every way suitable that they should choose the Bank of England as their victim.

George Bidwell, the senior partner—the nomenclature of honest business fits the Bidwell brothers like a glove—was a handsome, dapper man in the late thirties. He had a fine straight nose, any amount of chestnut hair carefully groomed, a moustache that partly hid a very firm, thin mouth, and two alert grey eyes

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which may have been too close together to please the purists, but which missed nothing that went on and appraised weakness and strength accurately, for these eyes were the windows of one of the cleverest brains ever to be perverted to crime.

On their first night in London, George ordered supper to be served in their sitting-room, and on returning from the theatre the Bidwell brothers and two associates settled down to hear George appraise the situation.

George's younger brother, Austin, was a good-looking young man, without his brother's mastery of planning, but with one invaluable asset. He looked like an American youth of good family, and sounded like a youth brought up at a good school and at Harvard or Princeton. Yes, Austin was the fashionable member of the gang. He was the gentleman, and a nicer-spoken, more gracious young American gentleman can hardly ever have invaded these hospitable shores.

The other two men in the room were George MacDonald and Edwin Noyes. It is enough to say of them that they were both hardened, experienced criminals devoted to the chief. They were completely reliable henchmen, not planners.

George Bidwell outlined his plan. He laid it down that in obtaining money from so venerable an institution as the Bank of England they must have two allies on their side.

The first was confidence. "The British," he said, "must know you, first. Before that you can do nothing." But once they did know you, it seemed, they were apt to be trusting, and transactions in your name passed into the realm of the second great ally—routine.

"These boys," said George, "never alter their routine by a hair's breadth. Each clerk has his own ledger, the As to the Gs, the Hs to the Ls, and so on. Bills are cleared by a routine that can be counted on to the day, to the hour, to the minute."

So the problem that presented itself was first how to get a respectable introduction to the bank, secondly how to instil complete confidence in the bank officials, and thirdly to decide what type of bill of exchange could be most conveniently cashed after passing through the labyrinth of the bank routine.

George had no doubt at all that the perfect fraud was to be perpetrated by presenting forged bills of exchange to the bank, which the bank would discount against the prospect of receiving the full value when the bills fell due. And George also decided that no bill should exceed three months in duration, as all banks, even the Bank of England, disliked long bills. Fortunately MacDonald was an adept forger, a really beautiful craftsman. If he had time and solitude, he did a lovely job, but he could not be hurried, as we shall see.

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It is a tribute to the genius of George Bidwell that he made full use of brother Austin in plotting his enterprise. George had a fine figure, the kind of figure that showed off good clothes to perfection. George thought that a tailor of impeccable reputation in Savile Row would be just the man to introduce Austin to the Bank of England. After a little research such a man was forthcoming. Mr. Green, a wellknown tailor of the time, banked at the Western Branch of the Bank of England. Austin descended on the unsuspecting Mr. Green.

I should mention here that the Bidwells had ample funds to finance their enterprise. There is nothing that induces confidence so readily as hard cash. It is an argument which, in our mundane world, with our money god, few can resist.

When Austin Bidwell entered Mr. Green's premises that fair spring morning he was so obviously the wealthy, wellborn American that Mr. Green had no doubts. Moreover, he liked the young man. So candid. So engaging. So rich!

Young " Mr. Warren "—Frederick Albery Warren—knew all the tricks of the trade, the fashionable trends. No, on no account should there be a turned-up trouser, did not Mr. Green agree? Real holes for the sleeve-buttons, of course? Mr. Green indicated that dummy holes would have practically put him out of business. And a buttonhole? Yes. It was allowable. It was useful. The young Prince of Wales had one.

This young man was the kind of young man that Mr. Green liked to deal with. He was better than some of the English aristocrats who were apt to be casual about their bills. These young Americans were brought up in a business tradition, no doubt. They could be relied upon.

When young Mr. Austin was leaving he said, " Mr. Green, I have to run over to Ireland for a few days to see some cousins. Could you look after my cash when I'm away, less than a week? It's about eight hundred pounds . . ."

Mr. Green was enchanted. This customer was all that Mr. Green could have wished, but he replied, " It's a large sum, sir. I'll introduce you to my banker. A Mr. Francis of the Bank of England. A very nice gentleman. You'll like him."

Mr. Francis greeted young Mr. Warren on the basis that any friend of Mr. Green was a friend of the bank. And when Mr. Warren mentioned that he had another sum of over a thousand pounds arriving in a day or so, Mr. Francis was as enchanted with the young man as Mr. Green had been. It was a happy meeting.

Confidence. The first step had been established. But still the confidence must now include the discounting of bills of

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exchange. Two bills, each for some hundreds of pounds for short terms, were presented and discounted in the name of that engaging impostor, Mr. Warren. The due date arrived. They were duly honoured. Now Mr. Francis knew that his young American client was accustomed to receiving bills of exchange for fairly large sums and having them discounted. The path was smooth and opened.

George MacDonald locked himself up in his hotel bedroom. When he emerged in the evening he had the first forged bill prepared. It was in the name of a very wellknown and highly respected French firm. It was a work of art. George Bidwell scrutinised it closely.

"It's a masterpiece," he said. "We'll put it through tomorrow." It passed through the routine without a hitch. Young Mr. Austin was paid. With the notes he bought gold, which he sold for new notes, paying them into an account of "C. H. Horton" at the Continental Bank. George Bidwell had no intention of the loot being traceable. He took all the precautions.

The next four weeks were paradise for the Bidwell brothers. Never a hitch. Never a question. They could hardly believe their luck. Here was the Bank of England—oh boy! the Bank of England!—paying out up to ten thousand pounds a day and not a murmur.

Other problems arose, of course, the problems that great and sudden success always brings with it. George had to keep the gang sober, to keep MacDonald on his job, to keep young Austin out of trouble—he was attractive to the girls—and to supervise every detail of the ingenious chicanery. It was quite a job.

On the other hand there was the sweet smell of success. There was the deference that money can buy. There was the charm of old London, wonderful food, exquisite wine, but no women. George insisted on that. Yes, young Austin could go to the races, of course, but he must bet in sums that would not raise eyebrows, and he must not get involved with a girl—no, never.

George was right. This was the kind of discipline that success demanded. This was in fact its price. But it was just the type of discipline that the ordinary criminal is so reluctant to accept. Even young Austin, who should have known better, chafed under it.

But he was not deeply hostile to the rules that brother George imposed until he fell in love with an English girl. When he told his brother of this, George Bidwell was desperately vexed. This was just the kind of thing that might land them all in gaol, he said. It was madness.

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Austin had to submit, outwardly at least. He knew that George was right.

The overall plan now was for George to remain with MacDonald and Noyes until the last bill was passed, Austin going to America first with over forty thousand pounds in sterling drafts. This suited Austin. He secretly arranged for his girl to meet him in Le Havre, where he married her and then proceeded on his honeymoon, well in funds.

Even Austin's secret indiscretion might not have been fatal. It was the punctilious MacDonald who made an unpardonable error. As the date when the last bill would be presented for payment approached, the tension rose almost unbearably for the forgers. George was able to remit fifty thousand pounds to New York to himself in a false name. All the gang intended to retire for good, to rejoin honest society. They had brought off the coup of a lifetime, the cleverest fraud on a bank ever conceived and perpetrated. Only a week was left now. In another two days George Bidwell and MacDonald would be on their way to the States. Noyes was to remain, but extraordinary precautions had to be taken not to connect him with the crime.

On that last evening, as MacDonald worked on the last two bills, Austin Bidwell turned the whole enterprise over in his mind. It was perfect. He himself had never been near the bank. No one could identify him as Frederick Albery Warren. It was the perfect crime.

Perhaps the prospect of imminent riches and freedom made MacDonald careless. He omitted the date on the last two bills. The bank manager was careless too; he did not notice it. The bills were duly discounted. The gang started to pack . . .

But a bills clerk noticed the omission and the bills were sent by the bank to the firm on whom they were drawn to have the dates inserted. The firm denounced them as forgeries.

The secret consternation at the bank defies description. Intensive investigation was made, and it became obvious that the Bank of England, which had never been robbed successfully of large amounts, had, in a few weeks, been tricked out of over a hundred thousand pounds, the equivalent of nearly half a million today.

The chase was on. Even then the gang might have escaped, for a time at least, but for another classic slip. In their sitting-room they left a scrap of blotting-paper which when held up to the looking-glass revealed the signature G. Bidwell. Bidwell! It was the name the police would have given anything to know. The net closed in.

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George was arrested after a desperate chase in Edinburgh. Austin and his bride were easily identified and arrested in Cuba. MacDonald and Noyes could not escape. The four faced trial at the Old Bailey. George did his best to defend his younger brother, all to no avail. It was penal servitude for life.

There seems no doubt that the nerve of the gang, which had been ice cool when they started the operation, was sadly deteriorated towards the end. MacDonald's mistake was incredibly careless. One would have expected every forgery to have been checked and rechecked for accuracy and completeness. The slightest error meant instant exposure.

When one follows the trial of the gang it is remarkable what infinite pains they did take until the very last moment. Noyes, for instance, who was used as a clerk, because he was to be left behind, was made the subject of an elaborate contract by a mythical employer to disengage him completely from his activities in connection with the forgery.

Again Austin Bidwell, when he assumed the name of Warren, did not merely employ an alias. He changed his personality. He changed his linen and his laundry mark; he changed his brand of cigarettes; he changed his style of handwriting and, of course, his signature. He was the complete impostor.

Most criminals intend to retire after a great coup. Few do so. The temptation to repeat a success is too great. But it seems that the Bidwells really did intend to leave crime for good and, such was their resolution and intelligence, they would probably have done so.

At least that is what George Bidwell said when he wrote his memoirs after serving fourteen years of his life sentence.

George Bidwell was a great criminal. He had everything: imagination, mastery of detail, boldness, cool judgment, discipline. He could have risen to the top of almost any honest trade or profession—but he was not that kind of man.

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 136

Across. 1, *Fire escape.* 5, *Tsar.* 9, *No trump.* 11, *Waste.* 12, *Leg before wicket.* 14, *Tee.* 16, *Camera.* 17, *Dab.* 19, *Reduce.* 21, *Elm.* 24, *One over the eight.* 27, *Satan.* 28, *Baby car.* 29, *Acre.* 30, *Photograph.*

Down. 1, *Final.* 2, *Elude.* 3, *Cupboard.* 4, *Powder.* 6, *Speckle.* 7, *Racetrack.* 8, *Estimate.* 10, *Tight.* 13, *Harmonica.* 15, *Excavate.* 18, *Bad habit.* 20, *Dresser.* 22, *Magic.* 23, *Branch.* 25, *Embog.* 26, *Torch.*

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THE FUTURE MRS. EVAN EVANS

BY JOHN DAVIES

HEARD the news, then, did you?" cried Mrs. Pugh the Post. "Evan Evans—coming home to Phwylly!"

Not much post office business done that day, I can tell you. Not many stamps sold, or anything else. Too busy, Mrs. Pugh, telling the news about Evan Evans. And all on the strength of a postcard Evan had sent to his mam. Better than the newspapers, or the BBC even, our Mrs. Pugh. By evening, everyone in Phwylly knew.

A sensation it was, too. Just fancy! Evan Evans, the big man up there in London, Fleet Street, and on the telly, coming back to the village where he was born! Coming for his mam's birthday and staying a week for a holiday. So Mrs. Pugh said the postcard said.

Terrible excitement there was, I can tell you, especially among the girls, Evan Evans being their own special pin-up boy, the boy from Phwylly who was writing *Your Lucky Stars* in that big woman's magazine they all bought from Mrs. Pugh's paper shop. Starring on the telly too, in *Your Face is Your Fortune*, Friday nights, eight o'clock.

Not only that either. Very goodlooking, our Evan Evans was —and still a bachelor!

Terrible, too, the strain of waiting for him to come. And then there he was. Big shiny car, shiny luggage, shiny hair, shiny smile. And all the girls waiting for him outside his mam's house, and sighing when they see him. But Evan Evans just smiles his shiny smile at them and dives in through the door.

And us men? Not excited like the girls, of course, but doing a bit of wondering about what sort of man Evan Evans has turned out to be. Some of us can remember him at school. Not a bad sort of chap at all.

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"Spoilt, no doubt," said Ifor Hughes, down in the pub that evening. "Only to be expected, that."

"Women," Pritchard said. "The ruin of a man." Strict chapel, Tom Pritchard, Bridge End Farm, and no wonder, with the wife he's got.

"Could do with a bit of that sort of ruining," muttered Harris the Milk into his beer. Got the same sort of wife as Tom has, old Harris, only takes it different.

"Too stuck up for his friends now," Ifor said. "Think so, Ianto?"

"Don't know about that," I said. "Must be some good left in him, if he's come home to see his mam."

And then, a minute later, the door opens, and there is Evan Evans himself, come down to have a few with us in the pub. Still the Evan Evans a lot of us used to know too, not spoilt at all, in spite of his fancy clothes and the stuff on his hair. Spent the whole evening with us, he did, as nice and sociable as you could wish.

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Very interesting it was too. There was a big old crowd there, of course—best business Ifor Hughes, publican, had done for years. And everyone wanting to ask Evan Evans about the stars and fortune-telling and all that. Very good about it too, Evan was, sitting there and telling them what they wanted to know. Very obliging, with his shiny hair and smile.

"Really believe in it yourself, do you, Evan?" Ifor asked him.

"Indeed I do," Evan said.

"If you had your own fortune told, you'd believe every word of it?" asked old Jones the Shop.

Evan Evans nodded. "Every word. Proved itself, it has, for me, time and time again."

Very serious about it, he was. Everyone could see that. Evan Evans really did believe in his stars. Not surprising that, either, when you think about it, seeing what they'd done for him.

A very good evening, that was—except for the girls. Got a poor deal, they did. Couldn't get in, poor things. Nobody under eighteen in the bar, and Ifor very strict on that. Knew how old they all were too, Phwylly being such a little place, so it was no good their trying anything on. Best thing they could do was nearly bust themselves with lemonade outside, giggling and trying to look in through the window.

Several of their mams were inside with us, though, and all of them wanting Evan Evans to tell their fortunes. Shook his head at that, though, Evan did. Wouldn't do it.

"Off duty, I am," he told them. "Enjoying myself on a holiday. Break my contract too, I shouldn't wonder." He had an idea. "Fair's coming soon, Mam says."

"That's right," Ifor said.

"Day after tomorrow," I said.

"Be a fortune-teller lady there, no doubt," Evan Evans said. "Go to her, I would, if you want to know the things in store."

"Why don't you go too, Evan Evans?" said Mrs. Harris the Milk. "See how good she is."

Evan Evans looked serious a moment. Then he smiled again.

"Good idea, that," he said. "Feeling lucky just now, I am." He looked round at us all. "Like to see the fair too—haven't been to one for years. Why don't the lot of us go? Saturday night's the big night, eh?"

The best evening we'd had for years, that was. Nobody moved until chucking-out time. Then we all took Evan Evans to his mam's gate, and walked home from there thinking and talking about it all.

One of the ones that wasn't talking but was doing a lot of thinking was old Jones the Shop. A cunning old devil, that,

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short weight and wrong change and everything, if he could get away with it, but gone from Phwylly now, I'm glad to say. Dai Hopkin there instead, and a much better deal all round.

That's by the way, though. Back to old Jones. There he was, walking home in the dark, thinking dark, crazy things.

What he was thinking about was his daughter Megan.

A proper cross to old Jones, that girl was. Not bad looking for anyone that likes the big, bold type. Smashing figure, especially upstairs. Not a nice nature, though. Mean and bad tempered, that Megan was, just like her old man.

So there she was, twenty-six and still Megan Jones, without much chance of ever being anything else. And old Jones still having to feed and clothe her, and going up the wall to get her married off.

Been trying for years to find a way to do it, he had, until in the end he'd got a bit cracked about it all. Tried all the ordinary, possible ways, he had, and a few impossible ones too, but he still hadn't given up hope.

Any man between eighteen and eighty who happened to be a bachelor or a widower got a good sniffing around from old Jones. And now, tonight, he was sniffing around Evan Evans. The more he sniffed, the better he liked the smell of Evan Evans too. A tremendous catch, that would be! He didn't see how it was to be done, but if it could, it would be wonderful. Plenty for Megan, and a bit over for old Jones too, perhaps.

Then, halfway back to the shop, he had an inspiration. Ran the rest of the way he did, on his skinny old legs, he was so anxious to get home and tell vinegar-face Mrs. Jones about it.

"This is the wheeze," he said, when he was home and Megan had been packed off to bed. "Crazy, that Evan Evans is, about futures and fortunes and fates."

Gave him a nasty look, Mrs. Jones did. "Get on with it, then," she said. She'd heard things like this before. And nowadays every idea old Jones had seemed madder than the last.

Jones grinned. Must have hurt him, that. Couldn't have done it, if he hadn't been full of inspiration and beer.

"Might do a little arranging of his future for him, I'm thinking," he said.

"How?"

Grinned again, old Jones did then, like a hungry fox. "Fair's coming end of the week," he said. "Evan Evans is going with a crowd Saturday night. Going to have his fortune told."

"Well?"

"Reckon I might get at the fortune-telling woman first."

Mrs. Jones sniffed.

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"Get at her?" she said. "Sick of you, I am, Micah Jones, coming back here drunk and talking dirty."

"A fool, you are, woman," Jones said. "Offer her something, I mean. Might make it five pounds." Winced then, the old fox did, at the thought of parting with five pounds, even in such a good cause. "Five pounds for her to tell him a tale about Megan. Arrange a meeting." He waved his skinny old arms. Getting more brilliant every minute, this idea of his was.

"Dress it up a bit, of course. Tell him he's going to meet a tall girl with a little mole under her nose, and what she'll be wearing and all that, and that she's the girl he's going to marry. Won't be able to help himself then. The hand of fate, it'll be."

Mrs. Jones sniffed again. "Enough to put up with, haven't I," she said, "without being tied up to a lunatic?"

So carried away, though, Micah Jones was, that he didn't take any notice of her.

The fair came Wednesday afternoon. The rest of Wednesday and all Thursday there was the business of putting it up. Opened Thursday night. By dark the big old engines were panting away, and everything was a blaze of light and noise.

Not many there that night. Saturday, the big day was. And all of us saving ourselves for Saturday anyway, to go with Evan Evans.

But old Jones was there Thursday.

Went creeping round the place, the old fox did, until he found the fortune-telling lady's tent. Madame Cleo, it said over the door, in gold letters mixed up with a lot of stars and moons.

Jones went creeping in. Pretty dark, it was, in that tent. Not much to be seen of Madame Cleo, except that she'd got a red turban thing on her head, and a sort of shiny dressing-gown, and lots of make-up stuff on her face, and big bits of flashy jewellery.

Madame Cleo looked at old Jones.

"Greetings," she said. "Greetings from the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, born on the banks of the Nile." Funny, deep voice, she had. She looked at old Jones. "You too wish to learn what secrets the future holds?"

"No," said Jones. "I want to do a deal."

Madame Cleo sat up straight and looked at him. "A deal?" she said. She had a different, ordinary woman's voice now. Welsh, it was, too. "What sort of a deal?"

Old Jones told her.

When he had finished, Madame Cleo sat up straighter still. "Asking me to tell lies, are you?" she said.

Old Jones felt like telling her it was all lies, but he didn't.

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"Ten pounds," he said.

Madame Cleo shook her head. The turban wobbled a bit. "My professional reputation—"

"Fifteen." Old Jones said it through clenched teeth. He thought hard about Evan Evans' big shiny car.

"Retribution would surely overtake me," Madame Cleo said. She shook her head again, a bit more carefully this time. "Not worth it, not for that much."

"Twenty," Jones said. He felt sick.

Madame Cleo went on a bit about Nemesis, then settled for twenty-five pounds.

Had to cook up a story, then, they did. Made a good job of it too, between them, I must say. Madame Cleo did most of it. Only natural that, seeing that she was in the story-telling line. Old Jones put in a bit here and there, just to help. And he told Madame Cleo how to recognise Evan Evans when he came to see her. Unnecessary that, really, since Madame Cleo seemed to know all about him already, just like any other woman.

When she and Evan Evans settled down for the consultation, or whatever it was called, she was to tell him that he was at last going to meet the girl of his dreams. Soon—perhaps even before he left Phwylly. That, Madame Cleo felt sure, was why he had come back. He might have thought he was coming just to see his mam on her birthday, but the fates knew different. It was they that had brought him home.

Tall and dark, the girl would be, Madame Cleo was to say. Like a goddess—and not one of the skinny kind either. Madame Cleo had a feeling that Evan Evans was going to meet her in a lonely place. There might be water somewhere near, but she couldn't be sure of that. Anyway, Evan Evans would know her at once, because of the little mole she had under her nose, and because she would be wearing a red dress, and carrying a bunch of the simple flowers of the field in her hand.

"She will be just a simple country girl," Madame Cleo was to end up. "But she will be the girl you have always dreamed about, while you have been lonely and far away, up there in the big city." And then, just as a last bit, she would tell him that he was going to marry her very soon, and that they would live happily ever afterwards.

Old Jones liked that bit. So would he, if everything went right.

But, when he finally crept out of Madame Cleo's tent again, with an awful hole in his pocket where the twenty-five pounds had been, he didn't feel so sure. What if something went wrong?

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Sunday was the day. Evan Evans would be going for a stroll up the valley then, some time or other. Sundays, everybody in Phwylly did that, except the ones that were ill or too old. Nothing else to do, in a place like Phwylly. And as soon as he had gone, old Jones was going to push Megan off after him, all done up in her red dress, her little bunch of flowers in her hand, with instructions to wait for Evan Evans as he came back, somewhere near the river Phwylly, to fit the water bit. Not hard that, either, since the river runs right down the valley.

Tortured by terrible doubts, though, old Jones was when he thought about it. And about the money. Twenty-five pounds! Supposing Evan Evans didn't go out for a walk after all? He was due to go back Sunday night—supposing he spent the whole day indoors with his mam, or packing those shiny luggage bags or something? Supposing it rained?

That night, and the next night too, old Jones prayed that nothing would go wrong. Didn't do much good, though . . .

But it didn't matter, anyway, what happened on Sunday. Because something else happened before that.

Happened on Saturday night, it did.

Saturday night we all went with Evan Evans to the fair. Pretty well all Phwylly, there was, I reckon, traipsing along the valley road. There was Evan, striding along in the lead, just as shiny and smiling as ever. A girl on each arm, he had now, and him leading the singing as we went.

Looking forward to having a real good old time, we were. And we did too. Went on the swings and the roundabouts and the chairoplanes and everything else. And our Evan Evans tried the lot. Won a couple of coconuts too.

"Told you I was feeling lucky, didn't I, Ianto boy?" he said to me. "Reckon that proves it, the way they stick those old things on."

Then came the high spot. We got round outside Madame Cleo's tent. And everybody there waiting for Evan Evans to go in.

He gave his coconuts to me to hold and nipped inside. In there quite a time, he was. And when he came out, he had a funny look on his face. Sort of serious, but excited too.

"Amazing," he said to me, when he came over to get his coconuts back. "Hardly believe it, I can't. Knew all about me, who I am, and why I've come back to Phwylly—and—and everything."

Not so wonderful, that, I didn't think. It seemed to me that everybody must know about Evan Evans.

I wasn't surprised at Madame Cleo knowing, even though I

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didn't know about old Jones then, and what he'd been up to.

"Tell your fortune, did she?" I asked.

"Yes," Evan Evans said.

"Gave you a good one, I hope."

But Evan wouldn't say anything about that. Wouldn't say anything to the others either, when they asked him. Seemed to be a bit upset, he did, to tell the truth.

Well, after that we all went round the fair again. One or two of the mams tried to get in to see Madame Cleo, but there was an *Engaged* sign outside her tent now, so they reckoned someone else had got there first. Seemed to be there so long that they had to give up.

Then we started back for home, arm in arm and singing, all of us very happy. All except Evan. He didn't sing, and he wouldn't have any girls hanging on him this time. Seemed to want to be left alone, old Evan did.

We got back to Phwylly, and it was there that the funny thing happened. The street was empty, as it always was at that time of night. Except that there was someone at the bus stop.

A young woman, it was. Pretty too. A yellow coat, she'd got on, over a white dress, and she'd a big suitcase down on the ground by her pretty little feet.

Funny, I thought. Didn't recognise her. Must be a stranger. Certainly didn't belong to Phwylly. How had she got there, then? And what was she waiting for? Everybody knew the last bus out of Phwylly went at six o'clock.

Didn't have much time to wonder about it, though, because, as soon as she saw us coming, she picked up her big heavy case and came to meet us. Came to meet Evan Evans, that is. Needn't have been there, the rest of us, for all the notice she took.

"Please," she said. Nice appealing little maiden-in-distress voice, it was. "Oh, please, can you help me? Such terrible trouble it is that I'm in."

Evan Evans seemed to be in trouble too. Looked as though he'd just been hit on the head. Hard. Sort of stunned, he was.

Found his voice at last, though.

"Tell me what the trouble is," he said.

"Oh dear," the girl said. "There's silly I was! Took a lift with a man. Horrid, he was. Had to get out, I did, and walked miles and miles! Then got here. Trying to get back to Swansea, I am—and no bus, is there?"

Evan Evans was still staring at her. Then, suddenly, he seemed to come to life.

He reached out. Seemed, for a moment, that he was going to take her in his arms. But instead he got hold of her suitcase.

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"Take you myself, I will," he said. Paused then. "Don't mind going with another man in a car? Trust me, will you?"

"Oh, Evan." Just a breath, that voice of hers now. "Trust you always, I will."

And that was pretty well the last we saw of Evan Evans that time. Came back next day, just for a minute, to say good-bye to his mam and get his luggage. Next thing we heard, he was back in London.

A proper mystery, it was. Couldn't help talking about it. Where had the girl come from? How did she know old Evan's name? And what had the fortune-telling woman told him that made him go so funny?

Then it came out. In a queer funny way too. In a play on the telly! More excitement, there was then, more even than when Evan Evans had come to visit us. Because the play was all about Phwylly!

A true play, it was too, or it was supposed to be. Evan Evans was the star, and the girl in it was a girl called Blodwen Phillips. It was all about how Evan Evans had gone back to Phwylly, and how he'd gone to see Madame Cleo at the fair, and how some terrible old man had got to her first and tried to get her to tell lies to trap Evan for his daughter, even offering her money—a hundred pounds—to do it; and how she wouldn't do it, but told Evan Evans the truth when he came, which was that he was soon going to meet a girl in a yellow coat and a white dress, and that she would be a girl in distress, and how he would help her, and would fall in love with her, because that was what the stars said he was going to do.

And at the end of the play there was one of those close-ups, just of Evan Evans and the girl, who was the real Blodwen Phillips he had met that night. Holding hands, they were. And then there was Evan Evans, smiling his shiny smile at the viewers and saying that they were going to get married soon, and in Phwylly too, where they had met.

A great success, the play was, being true and all that, or some of it anyway. Very romantic, and just showed what the stars could do. No doubt got Evan a lot more readers for his bit in the magazine, and lookers-in for that weekly show of his on the telly. And I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't already asking for a lot more money for it all too.

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Woman would be more charming if one could fall into her arms without falling into her hands.

DE GOURMONT

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CHICKEN

Suddenly he was still,
black eyes fastened on the little weapon

BY IRMA WOOD

GEM balanced the knife on his fingers. It was cool and delicate.

First time he'd stowed one.

Not that he hadn't thought about it, but something happened when you stowed a knife. You wasn't a tough kid no more—you was something the cops was after.

And the old lady'd had enough of cops . . .

He wiped his hands down his tight black jeans and laid the knife carefully along his palm.

Folks was a drag. They was a drag. And dames. Wanting to stow a knife on account of one and not to stow it on account of another. They was the dead needle all right.

He tossed the knife moodily in the air.

They was always somebody waiting to bug you. If it wasn't dames, else folks, it was them at the club. They boys had expected something when they seen Jewel give him the ice and toss a smoulder to Stash Merino. They thought he was chicken.

P'raps he was. P'raps thinkin' about folks *was* chicken.

The little knife spun in the air and dropped neatly into his palm.

He knew he wasn't classy like that Merino—that "Bongo Bull" as they called him—a real cat. But he was smart. He had ideas. How'd he got to be boss of The Rattlers else? He had ideas. Like wearing that ring with the red stone. "Rube" they'd called him at first. Then after he'd took up with Jewel O'Hara they'd changed it to "Gem." Gem and Jewel. And now she'd hooked up with the Bull and left him on the slab and the boys didn't like that. They'd expected something. They'd looked at him and because he'd played it close to his chest they hadn't caught on. But they hadn't liked it and he knew they'd put the ticket on him next time.

He stabbed at the air with the little knife.

He didn't ought to of joined—like the old lady said. But, "Better join, Rube," they'd said, standing close and tight.

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" Better join. An' don't give us no blow." That was four years ago when he was a kid of twelve and they was looking for recruits to level up with they Black Velvet boys and he knew he better join—else. And after, by being smart, he'd played along and they'd forgot he'd been drug in. They'd even made him Pres. when Dingo Murphy got sent to Reform School, and it had been all right till the Bull showed up.

His wrist snapped and the little knife jerked and jabbed.

That Bull. Making the scene with everybody's chick. Even Jewel. Jewel, who went crazy and swung far out just because he was cool.

Sparks of light from the blade leapt across and made infinite contact with his eyes. A jet of excitement spurted up from deep inside him. It communicated. Yeah, man. It communicated.

The contact, the eye-blade contact deepened and his excitement grew.

It was delicate. When you got with a knife like that you sure got with something. Something cool—and delicate—and deadly. Like Jewel.

He balanced on his toes, muscles rippling under the tight black sweater and jeans. Right arm extended, body crouching, tense, wary, poised like a ballet dancer, he dug that knife as it flickered and twisted. A live thing. A pure and delicate thing.

Suddenly he was still, black eyes fastened on the little weapon. His left forefinger pressed gently on the point and a scarlet bead oozed and slid on the silver thread. He shivered. Another bead. And another.

Rapture flared like a sweet madness.

Up in Clancy's Parlour the boys were whooping it up on the tubs, and the tight-packed jivers, rapt, dedicated, moved in a glazed ecstasy.

Stash Merino, the Bongo Bull, bent to the beat with Jewel O'Hara and, without coincidence, there was space round them. For the Bull liked room. He liked room. Hunching over Jewel, he beat it up clear and complex, building the static.

Jewel was small and gone with tilted eyes. Her breasts would be a sweet burden in the hand, but this wasn't kicks for Bull. He had an inconceivable preference for rolling the beat, and Jewel waited. Gone eyes and pale crazy mouth. She waited.

The beat grew, deep and steady, and the dancers went with it. Eyes tranced, shoulders hunched, the cats padded—hipped and goofy. Controlled and dominated by the crazy heaven-going beat. And the kittens turned and rocked inside the goof, held and gone.

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Gem put his coke down and avoided looking at Ginger Mitt and Spike Regan, two of the gang who'd come along with him to Clancy's.

It was too late now, but he knew he didn't ought to of told them. Last night the little knife had seemed the gas but, like always, if he had to make a go of it, he couldn't swing out far enough. Guess he was chicken after all . . . But he got heart for some things—like the time he went down the cliff after that dog. So he wasn't chicken. So what then? So he was smart. He had ideas. He gave them kicks. But all the time he was playing cool. He wasn't with it.

If he'd been by hisself he could've worked it out his way. Now they was there like a fog in his mind so's he couldn't think clear.

Them and the beat.

That beat . . . You got sent. Even if you didn't want to, you got sent. Like everything—always something pushin' you around. And after you'd went you was all mussed up.

The music stopped; couples started shuffling off the floor.

Ginger Mitt's voice trickled from the side of his mouth. "They got class 'ere, boy. Dig them debs. They got class."

Spike Regan agreed. "Yeah, man. They got class. Say, boy, what say you an' me gets ourselves a chick? What about that Jewel—she switches easy."

They guffawed and looked sideways at Gem.

"Yeah—so I hear. But that Bull—he don't give so easy."

Gem gripped his glass. See—like I said—pushin'. Always pushin' you around. Why couldn't they lay off of him? He was smart, wasn't he? They'd get their kicks.

He dropped his head and looked at them under his eyes. Then he slid his hand towards the middle of the table, palm down. When he had their full attention he rolled his hand sideways.

Their grins vanished.

"Jeez," whispered the Mitt.

Gem spoke softly. "You still sendin'? Want to gimme some more blow?"

They shook their heads.

Spike Regan spoke first, his little pig eyes glinting. "You sure give us kicks, Gem."

"Yeah, man," agreed the Mitt. "Kicks fer sure."

Gem saw the excitement in their eyes as he slowly withdrew his hand.

Creeps, that was all they was. Creeps. Just waitin' fer kicks. An' what was he? The boss? The sucker-boss, pushed around like he said till they'd got their laughs. Why'n't he quit now? Throw the knife on the table and cop out? Because he was

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chicken, that's why. Chicken. He wouldn't of stood for all this pushin' else. Hadn't got no heart outside of dogs . . .

"Hi, Gem. Changed your manor?" It was Jewel's voice behind him. He swung round. She was there, hooked up close with this Bongo Bull.

"Sure. Any objection?"

The Bull spoke for her.

"No. No objection, boy, like you don't crowd us. We don't go for no crowdin', me an' Jewel."

He spat a piece of gum expertly into Gem's coke.

Gem got slowly to his feet. Warmth was trickling on his fingers where he'd pressed too hard on his knife. He looked at the Bull. At the wide, padded shoulders, the velvet collar round the thick neck. The tight trousers, the thick-soled suede shoes. He looked at the curls low and thick on the forehead above the tight eyes and he knew he was trapped. Then he looked at Jewel—that crazy, gone doll, with the overbright eyes and free-wheeling hips. Kicks—that was all she wanted. Kicks. It was all a crazy trap. And no way out. No way. Never had been. "Better join, Rube . . ."

The old lady had been right. "They won't do you no good, boy." But she didn't know. She didn't know what it was like. Being twelve years old in a strange town and a dad in the slam.

"Better join. And don't give us no blow . . ."

Too late now. There was a pang. The old lady'd have to take it. Same like she'd always took it. Quiet. She'd have to take it.

He drew his hand from his pocket, and a few spots of blood dripped to the floor. He wiped his hand slowly on his jeans and cleaned the knife on his sleeve.

The dance floor was empty now.

Someone switched out the lights—all but the one in the middle.

It was quiet—except for a rustling sigh creeping round the walls.

Gem felt his throat ache suddenly as he saw the Bull push Jewel aside and step back. His eyes blurred and a vision shot into his mind of a long dark tunnel stretching away ahead, lit at the far end with a single electric bulb behind a grille. Sick despair filled him. A trap. A trap. Smart, wasn't he? Playing it close so's they'd not catch on. Kicks. Give them kicks. And more and more kicks. That way they'd never know he was just playing cool.

He stepped into the pool of light and faced the Bull. Moths pinned by a hundred eyes.

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The Bull waited. Powerful legs apart. Body forward. Arms curved. The knife flashing in his right hand.

A long sigh reached out from the shadows.

Kicks, was it? Kicks. So they wanted kicks. And him—what did he want? Not that tunnel. Not that. He didn't want no tunnel.

They were moving now. Cautiously. On their toes. Circling. Waiting for an opening.

Round and round.

No, he didn't want no tunnel. He didn't want that.

Round and round.

He didn't ought to of joined. They couldn't 'ave done nothin'. What could they 'ave done to a kid of twelve?

Round and round. Closer now.

Put the screws on 'im, that's all. The screws. But at twelve it ain't so hot, it ain't so—

The Bull moved in fast. Gem's sleeve gaped, showing a sliver of white arm laced with red. Another lunge, parried this time as Gem thrust upwards.

Round and round.

Watch 'im. Forget them other things. Keep dancin'. 'E's heavier. Keep 'im movin'.

Round and round. Quicker now. Eyes glinting. Breath coming faster.

Round and round.

Keep 'im movin'. Keep dancin'.

A blob of sweat rolled down into the Bull's eyes and he shook his head. Gem seized his chance. With a lightning thrust he hurled his knife to the floor where it stood quivering on its point. Then he dived, took the Bull off balance, and they hurtled to the floor.

Hold that arm. Hold it. Squeeze. Squeeze. Get yer teeth to it. Make 'im drop that knife. Bite. Bite into that wrist.

Over and over, the Bull using his great weight. Gem, tight as whipcord, hanging on to that wrist. Muscles straining. Hearts pounding.

Over and over.

Gem's mouth suddenly full of blood. His teeth grating on bone and sinew.

The Bull groaning.

Gem held on.

Bodies still now. Locked. Fingers of steel and teeth like the jaws of a trap.

A chance. A chance. The words burst like rockets in his brain.

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A chance . . .

The salt taste of blood whipped him to a frenzy and with a gasp that was almost a scream he made his final assault.

The Bull's body sagged. The knife fell, and Gem swept it out of reach as he rolled clear.

Over. It was over. No cops. No tunnels.

He lay still for a moment and then wiped the blood from his mouth with his sleeve. The Bull lay in a heap, groaning and nursing his mangled wrist.

Faces swam into focus. White. Grinning. Vacant. Excited. Sweating.

Voices buzzed.

"Man, dig that blood."

"Give 'im 'is knife."

"'E don't need no knife."

"What's 'is gang?"

The Mitt's voice, loud and—for once—daring: "Look at 'is badge, can't yer?" Then, the pride coming through, "Same as this 'ere. Come on, Spike, we'll get 'im 'ome. 'Ave ter report."

Gem shook the fog from his brain. 'Ave ter report. Sure. Sure. 'Ave ter get the O.K. from them other creeps.

He got to his feet and someone handed him his knife. Spike, eager for recognition, started wiping the blood from his arm with a soiled handkerchief. Without speaking, Gem brushed him aside and walked to the door. He almost fell down the steps into the dark alley, the stooges on his heels.

Ginger Mitt, reeking of bad breath, hair oil, and sweat, padded alongside. "The boys is goin' ter like this. They'm goin' ter like it a lot, eh, Gem?"

Spike trotted on the other side. "Yeah, man, best kicks since Dingo beat up that copper and locked 'im in the john."

Gem walked on. Kicks. Kicks was all them monkeys could think about. But you don't get no kicks in the slam.

He walked on. Down the High Street and towards the river.

"Hey, where you goin', Gem? We gotta report. The boys is waitin'."

Waitin', is they? Let 'em wait. Let 'em wait fer sweet nuthin'.

On down River Road. Across the railway. The town lights behind them.

"Hey, Gem." Anxious now. Puzzled.

Stopping at last on the bridge over the river. Turning. Speaking through bloody and swollen lips.

"Wouldn't want to disappoint they boys at the club. Wouldn't want to give 'em half a report. They wouldn't like that, would

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they?" He was busy with the knife, cutting away at the front of his sweater.

"Say, Gem. What yer cuttin' yer badge for?"

Gem continued cutting. When the badge was free, he laid it carefully on the parapet. He removed the ring with the red stone and laid it on the badge. Then he laid the knife down and folded over the edges of the cloth to make a neat parcel.

"Yer quittin', Gem?" Spike Regan's whisper was scared.

"Yeah, I'm quittin'."

The Mitt gave a low whistle. "Them at the club won't like that, boy. They won't like that at all."

For answer Gem leaned over the parapet, and they heard the faint plop as the little parcel hit the water.

He turned away, and his footsteps rang out on the hollow bridge and grew fainter as he drew away into the distance.

The two stooges walked slowly back the way they'd come.

"Wot d'yer reckon, Mitt? 'Im goin' ter join they Velvets?"

The Mitt spat. "Yeah—promotion."

"That knife—why'd 'e ditch it?"

"Scared. Yer got ter have heart fer a knife."

"Chicken after all, eh?"

"Yeah—I guess so. Chicken."

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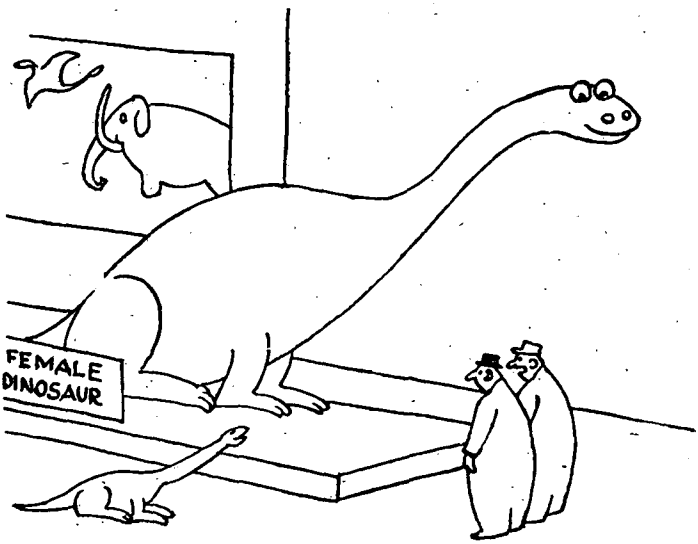

"All we know definitely is that it wasn't here last night when we locked up."

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The Mating

In a fit of high spirits brave Percy on leave
Applied for the hand of the fair Genevieve.
She took him.
That shook him.

B. J. PENDLEBURY

Bernard placed one arm tightly round her. When will you marry me Ethel he uttered you must be my wife it has come to that I love you so intensely that if you say no I shall perforce dash my body to the brink of yon muddy river he panted wildly.

Oh dont do that implored Ethel breathing rarther hard.

Then say you love me he cried.

Oh Bernard she sighed fervently I certinly love you madly you are to me like a Heathen god she cried looking at his manly form and handsome flashing face I will indeed marry you.

How soon gasped Bernard gazing at her intensely.

As soon as possible said Ethel gently closing her eyes.

My Darling whispered Bernard and he seiezed her in his arms we will be marrid next week.

Oh Bernard muttered Ethel this is so sudden.

DAISY ASHFORD, *The Young Visiters*

The Tender Trap

Clerk Saunders and may Margaret
Walk'd owre yon garden green;
And deep and heavy was the love
That fell thir twa between.

"A bed, a bed," Clerk Saunders said,
"A bed for you and me!"
"Fye na, fye na," said may Margaret,
"Til anes we married be!"

ANON

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Game

The besom, or broomstick wedding is now usually associated with gypsies, but at one time it seems to have been known in Wales amongst people who were not gypsies. A birch besom was set aslant across the open door, either that of the bride's home or that of the cottage in which the couple were to live. The young man leapt over it into the house, and the girl then did the same. Care had to be taken not to touch the doorpost or the broom, or to move the latter accidentally, otherwise the ceremony was void. It had to be performed in the presence of witnesses . . . Such a marriage was considered quite valid, however strongly the clergy might condemn it. It could, however, be broken without difficulty if, during the first twelve months, the besom was replaced in the doorway, and the dissatisfied partner jumped backwards over it from the house into the open air . . . If the rite was properly performed, both parties were considered free to marry again.

E. & M. A. RADFORD, *Encyclopaedia of Superstition*

Dual Purpose

Woman wants monogamy;
Man delights in novelty.
Love is woman's moon and sun;
Man has other forms of fun.
Woman lives but in her lord;
Count to ten, and man is bored.
With this the gist and sum of it,
What earthly good can come of it?

DOROTHY PARKER, *General Review of the Sex Situation*

The plain English of the politest address of a gentleman to a lady, is, I am now, dear madam, the humblest of your servants: Be so good as to allow me to be your Lord and Master.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON, *Pamela*

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Can I forget that winter night
In eighteen forty-four,
When Nellie, charming little sprite,
Came tapping at the door?
" Good evening, miss," I blushing said,
For in my heart I knew—
And, knowing, hung my pretty head—
That Nellie came to woo.
And as I, blushing, gave no check
To her advances rash,
She twined her arms about my neck,
And toyed with my moustache;
And then she pleaded for a kiss,
While I—what could I do
But coyly yield me to that bliss
When Nellie came to woo?

EUGENE FIELD

Black Beauty

When I was seven years of age our kitchen-maid was engaged to the farm foreman, and a night or two before the wedding a squad of men from our farm and others gathered for the " feet washing." Mary Gordon was a hefty " deem " and it took four men to hold her. We could hear the din upstairs, as she had been caught in the kitchen, and my mother took me and my younger brother down to see what was happening. There on the " dees," a great wide wooden seat with enormous arms, sat Mary, struggling in the grip of two men, while others held her legs in a big wash-basin of water. My brother, who was only four and a great favourite with Mary, began to scream ; but the sight of her cheerful laughing face reassured him. Boot-blacking was now being used lavishly on her legs. She managed to free a hand, rub it on them and draw it across the faces of her tormentors. When all were thoroughly blackened, honour was satisfied; and after a real wash, Mary treated the company to a good tea with buttered scones and jam.

JOHN T. CANTLAY, *Feet Washing*

Largesse

I sit all day,
Giving agreeable girls away,
With one for him, and one for he,
And one for you and one for ye,
And one for thou, and one for thee;
But never, oh, never a one for me!

W. S. GILBERT, *Iolanthe*

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CINDERELLA ISLE

BY LUDWIG BEMELMANS

THE head porter of the Quisisana, which is the Ritz of Capri, is a person any casting director would immediately dress in the toga of a Roman senator, consul, or even an emperor. With the dignity that behoves such a figure, he came from behind his desk, threw up both arms and, closing his eyes, said, "If you want to see Ischia, take a yacht and go there and float around it. But Ischia—I warn you—the natives there are indifferent if not rude to visitors, and there is not one good hotel on the island. Somewhere there are two sisters named Pirozzi or something, who cook in their home, but first of all you must know them, and next you must inform them ahead of time when you will come and how many you will be."

I still asked for the best way to get to Ischia, and he picked up a guidebook by Dottore Cesare Tropes. Its title was *Naples Environs*, and in it were listed:

Cumae		Herculaneum
Pompeii	Sorrento	Capri
Amalfi	Paestum	Capua

"You see, signore, as far as travel is concerned, Ischia does not exist. It is like Africa—if you insist upon going there, you are on your own." With that he went to tie tags on the baggage of a group from Hollywood going back to the security of the Hotel Excelsior in Rome.

Later, I sat in one of the world's most simple and beautiful restaurants, the Sirene, on the shore at the Marina Piccola. At a small table on my left sat a couple with whom I had a nodding acquaintance. Formerly Italians, they lived in America and had come here for a holiday. They were speaking in English, and each held a menu.

Husband: "You take the spaghetti?"

Wife: "You take the spaghetti. I—no. If I eat the spaghetti,

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soon I cannot get into that new bathing-suit and half my charm is gone."

She studied the menu for a while, then ordered the spaghetti anyway. The spaghetti eventually came and she took off her sunglasses and said, "I just want to have a look at these beautiful spaghetti before I eat them." She put the sunglasses on again and ate the full oval platter of spaghetti—it must have been about two pounds.

I had a languoste, which is the European crayfish. It looked good but it had a very strong iodine taste, stronger than the usual iodine taste of shrimps, for instance. The proprietor asked me how I liked it, and I answered that I preferred lobster to crayfish, that I thought Maine lobster was the best in the world, and that the languoste in Italy, on account of the warmth of the water, was not as good as the kind one gets in France. At the table to the right of me sat an Italian, also of the Roman emperor type—who resembled a statue of Julius Caesar in a museum in Naples. He looked down his nose at the languoste he was eating and cleared his throat—he was obviously displeased with my remarks about the quality of Italian crustaceans, and I knew he was preparing a speech.

A fisherman leaned over the banister that separated the restaurant from the stair leading to the beach, and I asked him how long it would take him to sail me to Ischia. About four hours was the answer. The proprietor of the Sirene came to the table with his wife, and said, "Oh, you're not thinking of going to Ischia—not for any length of time."

I said that I would like to spend some time there.

At this, Big Caesar could contain himself no longer. He dropped his fork and the last leg of the languoste. "For heaven's sake," he said, "don't go—you would die there. Take my advice and stay away." He washed his fingers and wiped his lips; he put the napkin down and turned his magnificent head towards me.

"Listen," he went on, "I have lived in America for years—I go there every winter. My sister has an apartment on Park Avenue—at an insane price, of course. Imagine, last year she paid one hundred and twenty-five dollars just to have one chandelier hung." He stopped to look at his audience. There was the proprietor, who had worked several years in a spaghetti joint owned by his brother in Jersey City; there was the proprietor's wife; seated near the kitchen was an elderly English gentleman with a young friend; then, a group of six—an Italian family from Naples; and the two people on my right. Big Caesar addressed his words to all these, rather than to me.

"Oh, I know it so well—that great country, and there are many

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things that are wonderful about it. But Americans don't know how to live. Take restaurants. Americans always demand a certain ennui, not a place to eat; a hole without air, badly lit, small, and too hard to get in—that is the most important part of a successful place in New York. Not food, not wine, just make it hard to get in so that to get a table at all is a mark of distinction."

Everybody had stopped eating to listen to him, and he continued, "Next, the Americans like to be served by an arrogant waiter—they think that too much attention or servility is undemocratic. The restaurant keeper believes the same—he is never in his kitchen, but busy being democratic, shaking hands, calling people by their first names, kissing the women, and slapping the backs of the men. The food we won't discuss." He turned to me. "What you said about American lobster is right, I grant you. But then, try to spoil lobster. It's like prunes. Who can spoil prunes?"

He turned back to his audience and said with mock praise, "Here in Italy we have made every effort to please the travelling public. Great care has been given to establish 'swell places' all over the country, complete with bad waiters and with swing music blowing on the food. The American tourist will find himself at home from Milano to Taormina but never in Ischia, for on that island is still comfort, the real old-fashioned comfort. It's a private place with modest charges and excellent hotels and restaurants; it's the Italy of Italians. There are a few English who live there and like it, but they are too few to spoil it—" I lifted my hand, but he kept on—"I don't say that all Americans are like that. But of those who come to Italy, only a handful has the courage to visit Ischia and maybe one of them has a taste for that kind of place. That one, of course, is richly rewarded."

The next morning Carmine, the fisherman, got his small boat ready, and we sailed for Ischia.

The island of Ischia has always played a Cinderella role. When the Emperor Augustus saw Capri, he traded Ischia to the Neapolitans for Capri, though the former is five times as large. Since then Capri has become famous, while Ischia still belongs to the natives. It has no tourist trade and, despite the words of Big Caesar, there are no good hotels. It is, as the chief porter said, in parts as savage as Africa; and, as the other man observed, it is private. The people, if not unfriendly, appear indifferent to the visitor; there is no great comfort in sleeping or eating, unless you are invited to the houses of friends who live there. It is a place of great interest and is scenically as magnificent as

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Capri. If you suffer from arthritis you will find it probably the most wonderful place on earth—the hope against hope.

Ischia, the largest island in the Gulf of Naples, is volcanic, and on it are many natural hot springs. The Italian naturalist Tenore determined that these volcanic wells protected the plant life of the island during the glacial period when the rest of Europe's vegetation was destroyed. Today this vegetation is so varied that Ischia seems like a cramped encyclopædia of all the world's flora. Plants of the tropics thrive here, plants usually found in the West Indies, Arabia, Central Africa, and India.

The island is dominated by the bulk of Monte Epomeo which, along with other local mountains, is the result of ancient volcanic upheavals. The immense ash and lava deposits of Epomeo make plant growth as lush as it is on Vesuvio. In 1850 a forest of pines was planted on the largest of the tufaceous masses, the Lava dell' Arso, which ran down Monte Epomeo into the sea. The forest still stands today.

If the coloration of the rock along the coast of Capri is astonishing and bright, here it is of more subtle, softer shades; yet the landscape changes from the tame and idyllic to sudden savagery. While you are afraid to walk fast in Capri for fear of coming to the ends of it, here you can stretch your legs. While in Capri every road, every house and garden, every face become known to you in a few days, here is space and surprise, and the people lose themselves in foliage and on sandy beaches. The existence of the people of Ischia is simple; here is still the patriarchal pattern of life. After a while one finds out that the natives are shy rather than indifferent.

The visitor may take part in the sorrows and joys of the people, but he will never disturb them by his presence or cause them to change their ways. For example, there are no local celebrations arranged for the benefit of the tourist, as in Capri. The men, with the exception of a few shopkeepers and government officials, are fishermen or peasants. The women repair nets or they are busy making straw baskets for winebottles or for hanging cheese. The straw comes from Monte Epomeo.

Almost all the girls of Lacco Ameno are called Restituta, that being the name of the saint of the whole north coast. This remarkable saint, according to legend, arrived from Africa on a floating millstone. The fishermen of Lacco Ameno waded out and took her ashore, and every year starting on 15th May the event is celebrated for three days with a regatta of fishermen's barques.

The women of the interior of the island, most of whom stay on Ischia all their lives, are nymphlike creatures of great beauty.

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They are devoted to flowers, a characteristic relatively rare in the south of Italy; they have lovely voices, which is even more unusual. They also have large eyes, even larger than those of their sisters on the mainland.

The young men have less to recommend them, and in the interior they are said to be hostile towards outsiders. A German historian I met on the island, Baron Eckehardt von Schacht, said that their attitude is explained by their history; the islander's experiences with visitors have made him suspicious.

Since the fall of Rome, Ischia has been attacked, occupied and pillaged almost without interruption. The Saracens began it in 813, followed by the Pisans in 1135, after which pirates took over; next came the Germans under Henry VI and Frederic II, followed by the Angevins. All these conquerors left their imprint on the native population so that you see today a mixture of Nordic, Arabian, and Spanish strains.

Under the Spanish occupation of Alfonso I, all the male population of the island was abruptly sent away and men of Catalonia brought in, and the women and maidens were forced to marry them. The frequent Spanish family name Pattalano is evidently derived from Catalano. In 1545, the Corsican pirate Barbarossa kidnapped four thousand additional Ischian men and sold them into slavery.

In addition to invasions, the islanders suffered the terrors of earthquake and of the volcano which was in constant eruption, taking thousands of lives.

Under the pressure of these conditions many of the peasants took to the sea, and there developed in Ischia a type of tough fisherman who still sails small boats to the far fishing grounds of Sardinia, and carries cargoes of wine to France, Spain, and the north of Italy. Also, the local boatman is skilled at catching forty winks while the noonday sun is hottest.

In 1580 an ancient medico, philosopher, and scientist named Iasolini published a book in which the mineral wells of Ischia were endorsed in the delirious vein of a public relations officer of our day. The text of this prospectus is here translated word for word:

If your eyebrow falls off and you lose the hair on your eyelids as well, go and try the baths of Piaggia Romana.

Are you unhappy about your complexion? You will find the cure in the waters di Santa Maria del Popolo.

Are you deaf? Then go to the Bagno d'Ulmitello.

Blind? Then immediately go to the Bagno delle Caionche.

Have you headaches, liver, or kidney trouble? Take yourself to the Bagno di Fontana.

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If you know anyone who is getting bald, anyone who suffers from elephantiasis, or another whose wife yearns for a child, take the three of them immediately to the Bagno di Vitara; they will bless you.

How much the followers of Iasolini benefited is not known. There are, however, in the National Museum of Naples, a number of votive tablets dating from the Greek period and bearing words of thanks for miraculous cures.

The most frequented baths are on the north side of the island and are fed by a spring named Gurgitello, from which source flow every day seven hundred thousand litres of hot water.

In the neighbourhood of Casamicciola is the most famous spring on the island, the Terme Restituta. This well is of the highest radioactivity known, having been measured at 376 Mache units. The person who came to Ischia and discovered this fact, unknown until the twenties, was Madame Curie. The next most radioactive spring in the world is at Bad Gastein, in Austria, and measures only 149 Mache units.

The baths on the north coast of Ischia are formal. Some of them have classical facades and remind one of European spas; on the south coast of the island there are just as many hot springs, but all are primitive. If one walks along the beach from Sant' Angelo towards the east, one will occasionally hear an anguished moan coming from the interior of the earth; farther on, the beach emits steam as if the skin of the earth were thin as paper. A hand extended over this surface is pulled back immediately; a kettle of fish can be cooked in this sand in a few minutes. But close to the sea it is cool enough for the natives to take steam baths in pools scooped in the beach.

Walking on, one comes to a narrow ravine which widens into a cave with perpendicular walls; it is called the Valley of the Violet Rays, or the Obscure Cave. As in the Blue Grotto on Capri all is blue and silver, so here every object is said to appear in violet light. Upon visiting it I noticed no such phenomenon—the light was plain daylight.

In a ravine rather than a cavern lies the oldest bathing establishment on the island. It is prehistoric in point of age, as well as in manner of operation. It is open to speculation with what instruments and by whom the bathing cabins were hewn into the rock. Your privacy is assured by a girl named Restituta, who hangs up a large cloth with the texture of a soggy dishtowel. Behind this you undress and put your clothes on a stone block; then you step into the bathtub which, like the cave, is cut out of lava rock. In a loud voice you announce if you want any change in the temperature of the water. According to your directions, Restituta directs hot or cold water towards your tub by the most

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primitive means—a system of channels hewn into the stone.

To the south-west, behind Lacco Ameno, where the street leads over a pass across weathered lava, the landscape takes on a character equalled only in Africa; the illusion is supported by the architecture of the houses, which stand far apart. The people are very friendly and hospitable. Near Forio, an engaging and prosperous town of six thousand, whose houses are also of African design, begins the zone in which Ischia wine grapes are grown; the vineyards reach south, all the way to Panza, a distance of about two miles. The grapes ripen in glowing heat, the beaches are wide, covered with volcanic sand, and the land is watered with warm mineral springs.

Here tomatoes ripen in April, to be exported to Naples and Rome. The speciality of the small village of Panza is a wine called Sorriso di Panza, which translates into "The Smile of the Stomach." It is sweet, and not everybody's drink.

To come upon a new horizon unexpectedly and find a view which would be described as "breathtaking" in a guidebook, is as great a discovery as finding a real Van Gogh in a junkshop. Of such astonishing surprise is the view that suddenly unfolds as you leave the magnificent, ancient and dirty town of Panza.

Nearby, the land is like an immense amphitheatre, with thousands of steps descending to the sea. The steps are in reality man-made terraces on which corn, figs, wheat, grapes, and olives grow. Deep stone cleavages framed in the red of poppies lead down to where the arena would be. In the exact centre of the picture stands the Torre Sant' Angelo on a towering peninsula.

From this point starts the trip to Ischia Ponte, the principal town on the island.

The hottest and most crowded bus I have ever been in takes the traveller on a road like a roller-coaster. The saint whose job it is to protect autobuses on Ischia deserves the most beautiful niche and fresh flowers every day. Nowhere do people depend on saints as they do here; curves are taken blindfolded and at top speed, and if the curve is downhill, the pull of gravity is happily added to the engine's best efforts. The driver talks with his hands to a friend sitting beside him, waves at colleagues on other buses—and nothing happens. Along this route appear vineyards from which comes the wine that is sold as Capri wine. It is good wine and its origin could be admitted without shame, but the power of labels here is as strong as it is anywhere else. After passing the vineyards we come to the pine forest on the Lava dell' Arso, and to Ischia Ponte, the seat of the Bishop of Ischia. The Bishop, a very round little man, crosses frequently to Naples. And as he walks the deck, blessing everyone who

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greets him, green and golden threads hang from his hat and wave in the breeze.

The landmark of Ischia, high on a narrow rock and visible for miles, is the Castello. It was built by Alphonso V of Aragon about 1450 and later occupied by the Syracusans, who fled the island during an earthquake. Subsequently the poetess Vittoria Colonna, an admirer of Michelangelo, lived there. Now the fishermen of Ischia Ponte hang their nets there to dry. It's exactly like the castle you see when you close your eyes and imagine a castle on a rock.

In this already varied and interesting place, the harbour of Porto d'Ischia is an added curio, being the only harbour of its kind in the world. It was originally a landlocked crater lake, situated close to shore. In the 1850's a passage was cut from the lake to the sea, an undertaking which took two years and resulted in the safest harbour in the Gulf of Naples. Here are found the classic coastwise sailing-boats, still rigged with coloured sails; their cargo is wine, fruit, and vegetables.

Near this unique harbour is a small park and in the park is a bench which had a part in altering one of the traditions of the island. On the morning of 17th July 1943, a man sat on that bench gazing towards the sea, contemplating the beauty of his land, his new freedom, and the truth of the proverb that the mills of the gods grind slowly. Suddenly he was dead—and from that day on, the people of Ischia have considered their unluckiest number to be not thirteen, but seventeen.

The man's name was Lucetti. As a youthful anarchist, he had had the courage to toss a bomb at Mussolini's car. The bomb struck the car's hood, bounced to the top, and rolled off without exploding. Lucetti was caught and sent to Ponza, where he was imprisoned for seventeen years until the Allied troops liberated him. He reached his home on the island of Ischia on 17th July, walked to the bench and sat down. And there he was killed by the last shell fired from Procida by the Germans.

During my stay on Ischia I made the acquaintance of Professor Georgio Buchner, who lives in Porto d'Ischia, and who guided me to places and people the less fortunate visitor never sees. But he did not guide me to the restaurant of the Sisters Pirozzi, at Ischia Ponte. I found that happy establishment on the tip half-heartedly given me by the head porter of the Quisisana, at Capri. At the Sorelli Pirozzi I ate my ten thousandth kilometre of spaghetti, and I can only say that it was as good as the best I have eaten in all of Italy.

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It was not necessary to obtain a formal introduction to the sisters, as the head porter had said, nor was I required to reserve a table —all the dishes are cooked to order. And the prices are extremely reasonable. So frugal is the life of the savant that when I mentioned this meal to Professor Buchner, he said, "So-so-hmmm—you had dinner last night at the Sorelli Pirozzi. Tell me—is it really as elegant as people say it is?"

"Have you never been there, Herr Professor?"

"No. Never."

"How long are you on this island?"

"Oh, approximately forty years."

"And you never get tired of it?"

"Never. You know it is incredible, but after forty years of taking walks I can still discover new ones."

Naturally, we ate at the Sorelli Pirozzi that night, in Ischia exclusiveness.

As everywhere in Italy, uncounted saints are revered on Ischia, every one of which has his feast day. Every village has its own patron saint, and all of them are carried about in processions with singing, candles, flowers, and much rivalry.

The favourite song of the island is dedicated to St. Restituta; it is old but ever new, and it goes:

Oh, holy Restituta, thanks to thee
The beans have grown,
The quail are gone,
And so at last has the enemy.

There is also a limerick left behind by a visiting poet scribbled on a washroom wall. At least it tells one how to pronounce "Ischia."

An Englishman living on Ischia
Got gayer and fatter and friskier.
Between dancing jigs
And stuffing on figs
He drank gallons and gallons of whiskia.

© Ludwig Bemelmans 1962

"I was born," said Ludwig Bemelmans, "in a hotel in Meran, a small city in Tirol, and I spent the first years of my life in a beer garden. An old maître d'hôtel was my nurse, and the chef himself made up my formula." Food has remained one of the great loves of his life. He began work as a waiter and has written with his own particular genius of food and restaurants, staffs and guests in hotels the world over.

Cinderella Isle is from Bemelmans' delightful new Italian Holiday.

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Cullender Castle

BY ROBERT STANDISH

I AM a ghost. Not a disembodied spirit, but a man who makes a fair to good living by telling other men's stories for them. And women's too.

Did you by chance read *Sand in the Bearings*, the story of Lady Olivia Brackenbury's adventures in the Sahara? No? Then you missed something. I mention it because I ghosted it for her. She was the romantic type.

I will say for Lady Olivia that she was most reasonable and cooperative, gave me a free hand and let me use my imagination a bit. Which is more than I can say for Lord Cullender.

There's a difficult man for you! He agreed to let me ghost his family history for him, and when I had spent nearly a year digging out the facts, he didn't like it. He didn't want a ghost so much as a whitewash brush. I suspect, too, that he wasn't terribly enthusiastic about having me for a son-in-law.

"I can't control the past actions of my ancestors," he told me when I broached the subject of marrying Belinda, "but I'll be dashed if I'll be grandfather to the children of a penny-a-line scribbler who hunts for skeletons in other people's cupboards."

There was a lot more, little of it relevant and all of it most unfair. However, let the facts speak for themselves. When I do a research job, I really do it. This one took me back five hundred and forty-six years.

It rained steadily all through the night of October 24, 1415. Our hero, a young Irishman named Patrick Cullend, spent it shivering under a hedge, awakening in the morning wet to the skin and wishing—cobbler that he was—that he had stuck to his last. The day was St. Crispin's Day. Patrick Cullend was a

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buck private in the relatively small English army facing the French on the field of Agincourt.

Now, as battles went in those days, Agincourt wasn't much. The ballyhoo about Agincourt has always been louder than the facts warranted. Keeping your powder dry is of secondary importance to hiring a good public-relations man. Henry V had the best talent in the business, even though Shakespeare wasn't born until almost a hundred and fifty years after Agincourt.

But to return to our hero on that fateful St. Crispin's Day. Patrick seems to have been very brave or very careless, for when it was over his breastplate had been pierced in seventeen places. He was lying on the ground, bleeding profusely from his wounds with a very low expectation of life. But—and this is all that need concern us—his conduct had been noted in high places. Henry V, riding past on a fast horse and congratulating himself on the

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fact that he had not needed it, recognised Patrick and stopped.

"Well, my good man, you bore yourself very bravely today, and I am most pleased with you," remarked the king who did not, as later generations have supposed, talk in blank verse. "What's your name?"

"Cullend, Your Majesty. Patrick Cullend."

"Irish, eh? And fighting *for* me! But you know, Patrick," continued the king, who had a very pretty wit, "with all those holes in you, you should have been called Cullender, not Cullend."

"Very funny!" groaned Patrick. "Terrific! Do you write all your own gags?"

"Now don't be like that, Patrick," said the king reprovingly, "because from now on you're going to be called Cullender—Baron Cullender. What do you?"

"I'm a shoemaker, Your Majesty. I left Ireland because nobody there can afford to wear shoes. I worked up a nice connection making dancing pumps for leprechauns. But they're like kings—they don't pay their debts."

"Well, here's one king who does, Patrick. Your luck has changed. You must thank your patron saint for that."

"What patron saint?"

"Tut, tut, Patrick! You amaze me. Not only have you a patron saint, but this is his day—St. Crispin's Day. St. Crispin is the patron saint of shoemakers. Where do you live?"

"Plymouth, Your Majesty."

"Excellent! On Dartmoor, which isn't very far from Plymouth, I own a castle which I almost never use. It's yours, Patrick. I give it to you as a reward for your bravery. Stand up and I'll dub you Baron Cullender of Cullender Castle."

"Stand up? Don't make me laugh, or I'll bleed to death."

"Very well, we won't insist on strict protocol. We'll record it in your patent of nobility that you lay down in the presence of your sovereign to be created Baron Cullender."

"What kind of a castle is it?" asked Patrick, dazed by the turn of events.

"Between ourselves, Patrick, it's rather like you, full of holes and draughty as hell. But I hope you'll be comfortable there. So get well, my boy—and don't lie about in the wet grass or you'll catch cold."

It was a nice gesture and bound to please the Irish.

Unfortunately for Patrick there had been five thousand French noblemen killed that day, so the entire English force, except for a handful who were horizontal, were away souvenir hunting. The result was that Patrick lay in the wet grass for two more

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days. Indeed, but for a magnificent constitution, he would still be there.

It is pleasing to record, however, that despite his numerous perforations and a bout of double pneumonia, Patrick did recover. Even more amazing is the fact that Henry V remembered to sign the patent of nobility and the deeds to Cullender Castle, because kings were notoriously forgetful.

Anyway, six months later, still wheezing a bit and remarkably spry on his crutches—the two hundred-mile walk from London had run these in well—Patrick arrived in Plymouth, having taken a quick look at Cullender Castle en route. He hastened to tell Bridget the good news. "Me a baroness!" she giggled. "What will the neighbours think?"

"You don't have to worry, my pet, because there aren't any neighbours."

"No neighbours! Who will I talk to in my spare time?"

"You won't have any spare time, my pet. There's two acres of stone floors to scrub."

Imagination balks at the hardships of the ensuing years while Patrick, saddled with a castle twenty times as big as he needed, tried to ride the economic blizzards. His only customers were those who felt there was a certain snob value in having shoes made by a baron.

Bridget's artless simplicity is worth a brief digression here. So unimpressed was she by the whole business that when she helped Patrick out of his perforated breastplate, she gave it a rinse at the well and used it for straining the vegetables.

It was at this stage of my research that I looked into the etymology of the word "cullender." In the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*—called so, presumably, because it has only two thousand four hundred and seventy-five pages—"cullender" is given as an alternate spelling of the more generally used "colander," which is derived from the Latin word "colare," to strain. The editors were unable to trace the derivation of "cullender." I intend bringing the matter to their attention and, doubtless, future editions will mention the little quip of Henry V.

If Patrick were baron, Bridget most certainly was not, for over the years, in the intervals of scrubbing the stone floors and battling with pneumonia—the chief hazard of life at Cullender Castle—she gave him five sons and seven daughters.

From 1452, when Patrick died, until late in the seventeenth century, the Cullends, despite the title, remained in almost complete obscurity. Then fate took a hand in the affairs of this family.

The fourteenth Baron Cullender made a pair of boots for one John Churchill, a relatively obscure Devon man whose years

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of fame were only just over the horizon of time. I cannot say from knowledge that these were good boots, but I feel that they must have been, because when John Churchill, who by this time was Duke of Marlborough, led the British armies to victory in the War of the Spanish Succession, many of his foot-soldiers were wearing Cullend boots.

The ground floor of Cullender Castle had been turned into a factory, and relays of cobblers were working three shifts in a vain effort to keep pace with the demand. That was the turning point in the history of the Cullends, and they never looked back. Then, as now, there was lots of gravy in army contracts. Anyway, when Marlborough's wars were over, the Cullends were living in real style, and it was this same Baron Cullender who rescued Patrick's breastplate from the kitchen where, after nearly three hundred years, it was still giving yeoman service as a cullender. The children cleaned it up a bit, and it was hung in a place of honour above the fireplace in the banqueting hall and thereafter known as The Cullender.

The Cullender owed its survival to solid construction. It had been made at a time when military thinking favoured heavy armour. Light armour was, on the whole, considered desirable for the upper classes, enabling as it did a quick getaway when things got too rough. But where the expendable ranks were concerned, the light and heavy schools of thought waged a ding-dong battle which was never conclusive. Armour that was heavy enough to anchor troops to the battlefield was also heavy enough to impede their movements. Conversely, armour which was light enough to permit free movement encouraged ideas which were not in accordance with the best military traditions, with the result that lightly equipped infantry, being unencumbered by horses, tended to vanish over the horizon in hot pursuit of their betters.

But this, however interesting, is a mere digression. Much of my research was like that, I found. For example, there is an item in the fourteenth Baron Cullender's accounts showing that he paid four shillings to an unemployed sign painter to emblazon in letters of scarlet and gold, on the wall where The Cullender has hung ever since, the famous quotation from Henry V's battle speech: *These Wounds I had on Crispin's Day*. Everybody pinches chunks of Shakespeare, but I am persuaded that the fourteenth Baron Cullender was one of the pioneers.

Nevertheless, let us give credit where credit is due, for the Cullends were unquestionably the first people to go in for large-scale manufacture of marching-boots. They set a standard. Just as there had been divided opinion on the weight of armour,

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so now there were two schools of thought regarding the weight of marching-boots. If the boots were too heavy, it was argued, there was the risk that the cavalry might find themselves at danger spots with no infantry to protect them. The cavalry, of course, was the branch of the service favoured by the upper classes. Hence the words " chivalry," " chevalier," " cavalier," and the Spanish "caballero."

The Cullend genius lay in designing a boot that was lightish but not light enough to encourage any wrong ideas.

The fourteenth Baron Cullender was a remarkable man. While admitting that certain standards of quality had to be maintained in order to get the best out of the foot-soldier, he held that it was a mistake to raise the standard too high.

" It is quite evident," he says in his wellknown treatise, " that the mobility and general effectiveness of a modern army depends in large measure upon the comfort and durability of its boots, especially the former. Take any group of one hundred thousand men at the beginning of a campaign. The stupidity of their generals ensures that six months later twenty-five thousand of them will, for a variety of reasons, no longer require boots. Those who are still vertical and whose boots are in poor repair need only glance round a battlefield to find a more or less unlimited supply of replacements. I submit that to make boots more durable than the men who are going to wear them is an economic absurdity, the burden of which will inevitably fall on the survivors, if any, in the form of higher taxation at the war's end."

Successive governments, seeing the force of these arguments, adopted what was known as the Cullend Standard. By the time the Napoleonic Wars came round, these policies were really paying off, and economists were no longer offended by the spectacle of battlefields littered with what were called " expended expendables " whose boots were in condition to stand up to another year of war.

I was talking a while back about my difficulties with the present Lord Cullender, the twenty-eighth baron of his line. " I don't want my ancestors portrayed as rascals! " he protested.

" Then you should have employed a novelist, not a historian," I told him.

He didn't listen to the rest, but I learnt via Belinda that he wasn't best pleased.

" After all," she said, turning on the sweetness, " they're my ancestors, too, and they'll be our children's ancestors, if Daddy doesn't set the dogs on you."

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Belinda, when she turns it on, isn't easy to resist. She has the authentic peach-bloom complexion, flaxen hair, and cornflower-blue eyes that prompted Pope Gregory I, on being told that the prisoners being marched through in triumph were Angels, to perpetrate his age-old pun: "Non Angli, sed angeli! Not Angles, but angels." She has a lot of other things too.

By the time the Napoleonic Wars were over, the Cullends were really loaded, because with British armies scattered all over Europe the consumption of boot leather reached fantastic proportions.

Then, during the thirty-nine years between Waterloo and the Crimean War, the Machine Age dawned. Fine, handsewn boots, such as had been made for Marlborough's foot-soldiers, were as outmoded as bows and arrows. The Cullends—infinitely adaptable—were learning new tricks. Indeed, they were inventing a few, with disastrous effects upon quality. Commenting on the high porosity of the Cullend boots made for the Crimean campaign, a crack reputed to be Florence Nightingale's has survived. Two orderlies were staggering past her carrying a laundry basketful of amputated toes. "Hold this lamp a moment," she said to one of them. Then she remarked bitterly, "Medical dictionaries will call this Cullend's Disease."

Realising that this was by way of being a literary find, I showed it to Belinda in my enthusiasm. "I don't think Daddy's going to like that much. Don't you think, Bill, darling—" my name's Bill, by the way—"that you could be a little more—well, tactful about all this? Why not write about some of the—well, nice things the Cullends have done?"

"I'd love to, my pet," I told her. "In fact, I've gone practically crosseyed looking for them in the family archives, but it isn't as easy as it may seem to you. I'm sure, for example, that between Patrick Cullend and the fourteenth Baron Cullender there were lots of charming Cullends. But if there were, they left no records. There is a complete blank for about two hundred and fifty years."

"I'm sure if you tried, Bill, you could find something nice to write about during the—er—blank period."

"But, darling," I protested, trying to keep the high moral indignation out of my voice, "you wouldn't love me if, merely to smoodge your old man, I were prepared to sell my literary integrity. Would you?"

She replied, "I could try."

I wonder, did Anne Hathaway try to do things like that to Shakespeare? Maybe that was why he only left her his second-best bed!

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I now avoided Lord Cullender. The wing of Cullender Castle where the archives were housed had a separate entrance. My research had by now advanced to the years 1910-20, which embraced World War I, which must have seemed like Christmas to the Cullends, with more than eight million Britons wearing out boots in France, Belgium, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and other gritty places.

Beginning with the year 1911 there was a battery of filing cabinets on " Russian Contracts." The then Lord Cullender was approached by an emissary of one of the grand dukes, shopping for four million pairs of marching-boots. Copious notes in Lord Cullender's handwriting told the story of protracted negotiations before agreement could be reached on quality and price. Starting with the emissary himself and ending with Rasputin, everybody wanted a cut, with disastrous results on the quality of the boots. In one conversation Lord Cullender suggested to the grand duke's emissary that in wet weather the Imperial Russian armies might find the boots gave better service " if your troops followed the example of our Chinese friends, who wear them slung round the neck by the laces."

The emissary liked this idea, and negotiations proceeded more swiftly.

The British Government, with two hundred years of dealing with the Cullends to guide them, installed resident inspectors in the Cullend factories. The head of the family refers to this in high indignation as " unwarrantable interference." But it undoubtedly improved the quality of the boots supplied to the British Army.

I hope I am not leaving the impression that the Cullends were merely rascals, for that would be an unfair picture of them. They were rascals, of course, but they were many other things as well. They were good organisers, with good financial brains. Above all, they knew their own limitations. There is an excellent example of this in the minutes of a board meeting held shortly after the 1914-18 war when it was suggested, as a means of finding employment for the eight thousand-odd workers who had been laid off at the conclusion of hostilities, that Cullends turn their factories over to the manufacture of civilian footwear.

Speaking against the motion, Belinda's grandfather said, " For more than two hundred years we have prospered making boots for consumers unable to exercise any free-will choice. I see no reason to compete against firms accustomed to catering to individual whims and tastes."

That killed it stone dead.

In one of the Russian files I came across an item from Moscow

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in reply to a letter sent by Lord Cullender in an effort to extract payments from the Bolshevik Government for boots delivered to the Tsar's armies. There came from Moscow a solid gold hammer and sickle mounted on a lapis lazuli base, with the inscription, inlaid in gold, reading:

TO LORD CULLENDER
IN GRATITUDE
FOR NOTABLE SERVICES TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The explanation of this ironic gesture is to be found on page one thousand eight hundred and twenty-two of Boraslavinsky's monumental *Rise of the Russian Proletariat.*

"There can be no doubt that the quality of the marching boots supplied to the Imperial Russian armies by their more industrialised allies, far more than anything written by Karl Marx, was responsible for the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is doubtful whether one mujik in five hundred had ever heard of Karl Marx. But dumb, patient, and uncomplaining as they undoubtedly were, there was not a mujik among them so dumb, patient, and uncomplaining that he did not know when his boots hurt him, or when the soles parted company with the uppers."

On page one thousand nine hundred and twenty-seven Boraslavinsky credits the Cullends with indirect responsibility for the grand old Russian marching song titled, *Limping Across the Steppes.*

This was a rich pocket of pay dirt.

Something prompted me to go into the great banqueting hall of Cullender Castle, where hung The Cullender itself. Seeing it was easier said than done, for The Cullender hung on an iron bracket close on twenty feet from the floor. Borrowing a ladder from a gardener, I was just able to touch old Patrick Cullend's breastplate, which was chained firmly to its bracket. I think at the back of my mind there lurked a query as to its genuineness.

Seen from the floor level, the thing was unrecognisable, just so much scrap iron, blackened with age where it had not rusted. If someone had told me it was a discarded coal hod, I would have believed it. According to the archives, The Cullender had seventeen holes, but I could find only eleven. But that proved nothing because rust could have eaten away the iron between the original holes.

"Satisfied?" asked the harsh voice of Lord Cullender from below.

"Perfectly," I replied, "but if it belonged to me, I think I'd do something about preserving it. In a little time it will all have been eaten away by rust."

To this he merely grunted.

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Then we got talking about the book I was going to write. He knew, or pretended to know, nothing about the Russian episode and hit the roof.

"If you're frightened of the truth, Lord Cullender," I told him, "you should have come to some arrangement with a romantic novelist. I'm a historian, jealous of my literary integrity."

"If your literary integrity, as you call it, means licence to call my forebears a pack of rascals, I don't think much of it. Furthermore," he added savagely, "if you write a line of the scurrilous nonsense, you'll never see Belinda again."

There it was, the straight choice between Belinda and my—well, call it professional pride. Since it was impolitic to write the truth about the Cullends and I refused to present two and a half centuries of rascality in any other guise, I was, so to speak, on the spot.

When I told Belinda what her father had said, she said, "The only thing to do, darling, is to abandon the book."

"And chuck away the fruit of twelve months' research?" I asked.

"I'm not deaf," she replied. "If you really loved me, you wouldn't hesitate."

"If you really loved me," I was forced to tell her, "you would put my amour-propre before any other consideration. Your father, I notice, doesn't mind living like a fighting cock off the proceeds of Cullend skullduggery."

There was a lot more, of course, and none of it worth repeating. But on the following day, when I went to the wing where the archives were kept, the doors were locked against me. But I had already taken from the files the most damning documents I needed to substantiate my case. Furthermore, I had Lord Cullender's signature to a contract which, among other things, gave me the right to remove from the files such documents as I needed, provided that I left a written receipt for them and returned them when the book was completed.

Realising that it wouldn't be long before I was barred from the castle, I took one more look at The Cullender. Lord Cullender arrived in the banqueting hall just as I had taken the last of a roll of flash photos of it.

Suspecting that I was no longer a welcome guest—"Get out and don't come back!" was the way my host put it—I packed my bags and left.

I spent the next months in London, writing the book, seeing Belinda only on the few occasions when her father let her off the leash. When the book was completed, I sent Lord Cullender

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a carbon copy, inviting him, in accordance with the terms of our contract, to "correct any inaccuracies." I pointed out at the same time that this did not give him the right of general censorship. Attached were photostat copies of the relevant documents which I held.

The best resolution of our differences would have been for Lord Cullender to have offered to buy the copyright of the book from me at a figure which would have given me some reasonable compensation for eighteen months' work. But the offer had to come from him, for if I had proposed it, my action might have been construed as obtaining money from him under threat of publication. I didn't want him to buy me out, mark you, because my publishers were wildly enthusiastic and confident that they had a prospective best-seller on their hands.

Under the terms of my contract with Lord Cullender I was, as stated earlier, the "ghost." If he approved of the book, it was to appear under his name but we had not provided for the possibility that he would disapprove. Since he had never paid me a cent and had merely put the family archives at my disposal, my view—and my lawyer's—was that the copyright was mine and that, while he was free to refuse to have his name on the cover, there was nothing whatever to stop me from publishing it under my own name.

When two weeks had passed without a reply from Lord Cullender, I wrote him a further letter in conciliatory terms, suggesting that if he cared to write a preface to the book pointing out any passages which in his judgment were unfair to the Cullend family and offering his own interpretations, I would be happy to embody it. This letter, of course, was submitted to my lawyer before I posted it.

This time there was a reply, which took the form of an abusive letter in which he demanded the return of all documents "abstracted from the Cullend archives" and threatening criminal proceedings if I did not comply within forty-eight hours.

Belinda arrived an hour after the letter. "Daddy is being very difficult," she told me. "Please, Bill, darling, send him back what he wants."

"Whose side are you on?" I asked her. "His or mine?"

"I'm not on anyone's side," she replied, "and I think you're both behaving like children."

"Marry me right away, Belinda," I said, "and I'll do as you say."

But she wouldn't do that. She was too scared of her old man. "Then, as I understand it," I said slowly and distinctly, "you'll marry me only with your father's consent. Is that it?"

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"Yes, darling, that's it. But," she added, "you'll never get it."

"But if I do get it, you'll marry me?"

"Of course, darling!"

"You just leave that side of it to me," I told her.

That evening I sent a large envelope to Lord Cullender by registered post. In it, among other things, was a formal request for Belinda's hand in marriage. Three days later Belinda phoned me from Cullender Castle to say that her father had consented to an early wedding. On the day following that I received a note from him, phrased coolly, but agreeing to the publication of *The Cullender*, as I planned to call the book, and taking me up on my offer to let him write a preface.

There is little more to tell. Belinda and I were married from Cullender Castle. I have seen fathers give away their daughters with more enthusiasm than shown by Lord Cullender in giving Belinda to me. But all I wanted was Belinda.

All that is in the past tense now. Belinda and I have been married more than a year. Indeed, our son's baptismal name—or one of them—is Patrick.

Belinda and I are ideally happy, or would be if she didn't ask me almost every day to tell her how I overcame her father's objections to the match.

I am hoping that in time she will forget about it, because this is a question I don't intend to answer.

The big envelope contained an enlargement of one of the photos I had taken of The Cullender, and on the back of it is a certificate signed by one of the world's leading authorities on fifteenth-century armour to the effect that The Cullender is a backplate and not, as the family has always supposed, a breastplate, which raises the query as to what precisely Patrick was doing on that far-off St. Crispin's Day.

The Cullender no longer hangs in the banqueting hall at Cullender Castle. Perhaps one day Belinda, Patrick, and I will live there. Meanwhile, I am in the market for a good, strong fifteenth-century breastplate. I'm just the boy to shoot a few holes in it.

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PIERCING CRY

An authoress armed with a skewer
Once hunted a hostile reviewer.
"I'll teach him," she cried,
"When I've punctured his hide,
To call my last novel too pure."

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WILD ORCHID

BY STUART CLOETE

THERE'S not much variety in men's conversation at a bar—any bar—and The Bunch of Grapes was no different. Sport, horses, women—football, racing, women. Always it ends with women. Remarks, anecdotes, jokes.

When they got a bit rough, Rose, the big blonde barmaid, would say, "Cut it out, boys. We'll 'ave none of that off-colour stuff in 'ere. Please remember I'm a lady."

And she was, too, in a kind of way; with a certain dignity, like a big pink rose à la France for instance, that's come to its full bloom, and you say, "What a bud it must have been!" A bud with drops of dew like diamonds on it on a summer morning. Rose by name, Rose by appearance, and Rose by nature. A nice girl, rising forty, but you couldn't help wondering who'd worn the bud, into whose lap the morning dew had fallen.

This was in my mind. I was stirring these thoughts around quite vaguely when the chap next to me started talking: not just telling stories that were cut a bit close to the knuckle. There was something in the air when he began, so that everyone fell silent; even the chaps playing darts stopped, and a big man who'd just ordered a pint of bitter put it down on the bar without touching it; some slopped over and Rose leaned forward to mop it up with her dishcloth—a barmaid's reflex that showed the lovely swell of her bosom and the cleft that divided it.

"Girls," the chap said. He wasn't drunk, or nearly drunk. If he had been, Rose would have had him out. But he wasn't sober either. Just nicely, thank you. A bit seedy-looking, his

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blue serge suit a trifle shiny in places. His black shoes were clean enough, but they had both been patched. A chap who'd seen better days, you'd say. Nice looking, though worn now, his looks a bit fuzzy round the edge, as if they'd been used too much. Weak, I thought, and a chip on his shoulder. Another couple and he'd be quarrelsome. New here and not the kind we like at The Bunch, as we call it.

"Girls," he said again. "Unless you've been in the East, you've never seen a girl." He wiped his forehead, that was sweating a bit, with the back of his hand.

"Small," he said, "slim, arrow-straight, a sixteen-inch waist is average there." He made a spanning movement with his hands on the zinc bar, a bit like a chap measuring the fish he's caught, only then he holds them straight up and down. This chap's hands were curved, cupped as if they held something small, warm, and infinitely precious between them.

Then he went straight into the story.

"There was a chap I knew once in Penang. That's in Malaya, you know," he said. We all nodded as if we had known. "He was an accountant," he said. "Worked for a firm of importers, —a big show. He wasn't a bad chap; a hard worker, good at figures, and ambitious. A chap with a dream. You've got to have a dream, you know." He raised his head and glared at us as if we didn't have dreams, too.

I had a greyhound once, a good one. And I dreamed he'd make my fortune. And he might have, if he hadn't broken his leg.

Then there had been Dolly. I'd dreamed about her a lot, and then she'd married a policeman. Now she's fat, with four kids. But she was my dream once.

Dreams! As if he was the only man with dreams. Because, of course, all this talk about a man he had known was all boloney, like a girl going to a doctor to talk about her friend who is ill.

If I'd been a spitting man, I'd have spat on the floor. But Rose would never hold with that, not even with sawdust on the floor. Quite a lady she was, like I said.

"Now this chap," he went on, "had a girl. A Chinese girl, a secretary by the name of Lin. Shacked up with her he was, and happy, too. A kind of heaven that was for him. Like living with a gold-skinned angel. Gentle as a butterfly and a good cook, too, if you like Chinese food—Cantonese, that is. Everything was lovely in the garden for this chap. A good job, a pretty girl . . .

"But then along came a chartered accountant. Out from home.

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He was going over the books for the several companies, but as far as this chap was concerned, he'd come at the wrong time. A month earlier or a month later would have been fine, but that's the way they fall sometimes. Not that this chap was a crook. Oh no. He'd never fiddled with the accounts. But he'd seen a chance and bought some tin shares with money that was lying idle.

"It was more than a tip, it was a certainty. He knew the consulting engineer who'd done the survey. 'You can put your shirt on it, Jack,' he said. The chap's name was Jack. The trouble was, he didn't have any shirt—not that kind of shirt anyway. Keeping a girl, even in the East, costs money if you want her looking nice; and what's the good of having a girl who doesn't look nice?"

He stared around. "Silk . . . satin . . ." he said. "All embroidered with dragons and birds and bamboo and flowers." He was looking into the mirror behind the bar as if he saw these glories reflected there. The slim, golden girl in silk staring at him from among the bottles.

"When he got back home that night, Lin said, 'What's long, Jack?' She could not say an 'r.'

"That's something about these Chinese girls. You can't keep anything from them. Makes you nervous at first. There's a word for it." He searched the rows of bottles with his eyes as though they were the pages of a dictionary and came up with it. "Perspicacious. That's the word. So he told her, Jack did.

"'Have you been stealing, Jack?' she asked. Now stealing is a nasty word in English. So he said, 'No. I just borrowed a bit, to speculate with, to buy some shares. Certainties. I'd have put it back next month.'

"'You go to plison,' was all she said. Then she kissed him—went up to him and stood on tiptoe to do it. You ever see an orchid against a tree?" He answered himself. "Of course not. Just in shops. Those big purple numbers with ribbons on them and stems wrapped in silver foil.

"But a wild orchid is different," he said. "It's small and light. It clings to the bark and the tree doesn't even know it's there. That's what they're like," he said, "to hold, to dance with. A bit of thistledown's like an elephant compared with those girls.

"Then she sat on his lap and asked him where the accountant was staying.

"'The E. & O.,' Jack said.

"'We'll go there tomorrow,' Lin said. 'I want to meet him.'

"I'll not have you—I won't have anything like that,' Jack said.

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" ' It won't be like that,' she said. ' You arrange it. Tell him your Chinese girlfriend wants to meet him. Tell him we'll meet at the E. & O. Pick him up at seven, take him back and give him a real Chinese meal. Say your girlfriend wants to meet a real big shot from over the sea, from the U.K. Tell him she is pretty.'

" ' Suppose he won't come? ' Jack said.

" ' He'll come. Did you ever hear of a man not wanting to meet another man's mistress? Men are curious about things like that. What's she like? he'll wonder. Will it show? ' Then she said, ' What's he like—to look at, I mean? '

" ' Who's curious now? '

" ' I want to know.'

" ' He's a big flashy chap. Looks as if he drinks a bit. In fact, he does, I know. Redfaced, reddish hair, rather thin on top, blue eyes a bit washed out and popping, mouth like a fish—a carp—sort of sucking mouth with big lips.'

" ' Then he likes drink and women,' Lin said.

" ' None of that,' Jack said. ' Not even for—'

" ' Not even for prison? ' she said.

" ' I believe you would,' Jack said.

" ' I am your woman,' she said.

" ' Well, the answer is no. And no again. There are limits to everything.'

" She smiled. ' You fix it,' she said.

" Lin had been right as usual. When Jack suggested dinner next morning when they met at the office, Ballinger jumped at it.

" ' Chinese girlfriend, eh? ' he said. ' I'd like that. Lucky dog, aren't you? ' He poked him in the ribs with a thick forefinger. ' They say they're good,' he said. ' If you know what I mean.'

" Jack knew what he meant, but skipped it and said, ' She's a secretary.'

" ' Civilised, eh? Educated. Sounds better and better.'

" ' And a wonderful cook, Mr. Ballinger. A real home-cooked Cantonese dinner would be an experience.'

" ' Pretty, too, I'll bet,' Ballinger said. He had a one-track mind.

" ' I think so,' Jack said, ' and I'm glad you're coming. I'll ring her up.'

" I don't suppose any of you know the old Eastern and Oriental Hotel in Penang. Big place. Some rooms are air-conditioned, but the ones facing the sea don't need it. Always a breeze there.

Ballinger was waiting in the big lounge when they came, and

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Jack could see Lin knocked him sideways. His face got redder. His eyes almost popped out of his head and he began to sweat.

" She did look lovely, too, in an oyster-coloured satin cheongsam split almost to the top of her thighs. It was embroidered with gold and black. She had a high Indonesian tortoiseshell comb in her hair, and satin shoes to match her dress with three-inch heels. A picture she was.

" ' I want you to meet Miss Lin Koo,' Jack said.

" ' Lin, this is Mr. Ballinger, a big shot from the U.K.' Jack laughed a bit selfconsciously as he said it. He wanted to flatter the chap, of course, but wanted to do it in a light kind of way.

" ' Well, Jack,' Ballinger said, ' you were right. I must congratulate you on your friend. Beautiful,' he said. ' You are beautiful, Miss Lin.' He was looking at her pale gold thighs as she sat down.

" ' I'm not Jack's friend, Mr. Ballinger,' Lin said. ' I'm his concubine.'

" ' Don't say things like that,' Jack said. ' Don't pay attention to her, Mr. Ballinger. She's my girlfriend. Let's leave it at that.'

" ' And a beautiful one,' Ballinger said, blowing out his cheeks. ' Beautiful.'

" I don't suppose he'd ever heard the word ' concubine ' before, or ever seen it in print except in the Bible. Concubines, eunuchs, and words like that are not in common usage.

" ' What will you drink? ' Ballinger asked.

" ' Stingers,' Jack said. ' Whiskies and sodas.'

" ' Both of you? '

" ' Yes,' Lin said. ' I like whisky. It's so sophisticated, don't you think? No ice.'

" ' No ice all round, I think,' Jack said. ' You don't want ice, do you, Mr. Ballinger? '

" ' Not for me. But this is on me, my boy. You take me to dinner, but this party's mine. Fair's fair, I always say.'

" Lin said, ' I am Chinese, you know, and with us there are many concubines. A man can have several wives—a number one and a number two, and so on, and also have concubines. He may also have concubines and no wife at all. It is a respectable position, Mr. Ballinger.' She smiled at him, crinkling her eyes, her mauve, orchid-petal lips curling upwards and showing her teeth. She had pretty teeth, like little peeled almonds.

" They drank for an hour or so and talked. Lin did not say much. She just listened and smiled appreciatively.

" ' I can tell you one thing, Jack,' Ballinger said, ' off the record, of course, but you are going places. I haven't been over

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the books yet. I start tomorrow. But what I've seen of your work surprises me. Beautiful,' he said. His eyes were on Lin's thighs again. 'Neat,' he said, 'and you like figures. I can see that. Like me,' he said.

"'You know, I always think of figures as if they were notes of music; a trial balance is a kind of symphony. Lovely shapes. Ten lovely shapes if you include zero. And take a six or an eight—lovely,' he said. 'And you know, Jack, I like the way you cross your sevens, European style. Saves a lot of mistakes. No chance of taking a seven for a one, and it's prettier, too. Adds variety. The spice of life, hey?' He looked at Lin and winked. 'What about a drink?' he said. 'Talking makes me thirsty.'

"The lounge was full by then. More Chinese had come in, some in Western clothes, some in cheongsams. Malays in kabayas and sarongs, the men with round black velvet caps. And Europeans, of course, drinking, talking, and eating potato crisps. They make good ones there. Very salty. They say it's to compensate for the salt you lose sweating so much, but it makes you drink more, too.

"At the other end of the lounge is the garden, a lawn with old guns on it and a sea wall and the sea. Out there in the roads the ships lie at anchor or pass by on their way to the docks. There's always a breeze in the lounge from the sea and the big white fans on the ceiling. If it's very hot, they go fast, so fast you can't see the blades.

"They were turning slowly, just ticking over. Jack was watching the fans when Lin said, 'Let's go now,' and got up. Ballinger got heavily to his feet. Lin turned to Jack and said, 'Mr. Ballinger and I will go by pedicab. It will be an experience for him to go through the town slowly, and see it all lit up. You follow us in another.'

"'O.K.,' Jack said, but he wasn't happy. So she wanted Ballinger alone. He knew that for his sake she'd let him maul her. Then he thought, Well, you can't do much in a pedicab, it's not like a taxi, and got into one to follow. Of course he couldn't see them, just the bent back and the strong legs of the rickshaw boy as he pedalled down Penang Road.

"There were lights in the shops and the street vendors with their goods spread out on the pavement had little flares to light them. The red, Chinese, neon-lighted ads were decoration in the sky. They might say DRINK COCA-COLA or USE TIGER BALM—who could tell? But they were beautiful against the indigo sky.

"There were smells as vivid as colours. Sweet frangipane, curry, nightsoil, rotting fish, the scent of some other sweet night-blooming flower. It was all a kind of a dream to Jack. Lin

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with that man. The man who thought figures were like notes of music. The man who licked his lips when he looked at Lin's thighs. The man who would start on the books tomorrow.

"At last it was over and they were at the little house he had taken for Lin. She had just opened the door when he got there. Ballinger was close behind her.

"She switched on the light. Jack knew what Ballinger was thinking. The love nest.

"The table was all set, the old wrinkled woman who had been Lin's amah had everything ready. There was a bottle of whisky on the table. He watched Lin pour out a stiff one and give it to Ballinger.

"'Something to keep out the evening chill,' she said, laughing up at him.

"Then dinner. It was superb. Crab yolk shark's fin soup. Roast chicken, Cantonese style. Duck skin. Sweet and sour fish. Ballinger couldn't get over it.

"And now Lin said, 'Before we have coffee and a liqueur—' she smiled at Ballinger—'you see, I know you mustn't have brandy on top of whisky—we'll have a real treat. A durian, the fruit that smells so bad and tastes so good. That will be a real experience for you, Mr. Ballinger, something to talk about. Do you know,' she said, 'tigers love them. In the jungle they wait under the trees for the fruit to fall, and then rip it open with their claws.'

"She served Ballinger herself. Then she put some on two other plates—one for herself and one for Jack. As she brought them to the table, she screamed and dropped them.

"'What is it?' Jack said. 'What happened?'

"Ballinger gasped as she pulled up her cheongsam and stood with her legs together.

"'A mouse,' she said, then laughed again. 'Now you can say all women are the same, Mr. Ballinger. Chinese or European. All women are afraid of mice. And my plates,' she said, 'my very best plates that came from my great-grandfather in Canton.

"'Go on eating, Mr. Ballinger,' she said. 'We can get durian any time.'"

The man at the bar stopped talking.

"And? What happened next? Don't stop," someone said.

"Happened?" the man said. "He died. Ballinger died. Alcohol taken with durian is fatal.

"When it was over, when the fuss was over and the funeral over, Jack said, 'Why did you do it, Lin?'

"'Do what?' she said.

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" ' You knew,' he said. ' You knew it would kill him.'

" ' You are my man,' she said."

" And the shares? " someone said.

" They made a packet. The books were in order when the next man came."

" And the girl? " I said. " What did you do about the girl? "

" Me? " he said.

" Of course," I said. " You're Jack, aren't you? "

" I left her," he said. " I came home. Couldn't stay with a murderess, could I? " He dropped his head on his arms and began to cry. The horrible choking sobs of a man. Rose patted his shoulder.

" You bloody fool! " I said.

And I spat. Rose or no Rose.

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BATTLE OF GIANTS

Hugh Cudlipp's AT YOUR PERIL

USING the terse, hard-hitting style that made his history of the Daily Mirror so vivid and readable, HUGH CUDLIPP's new book, AT YOUR PERIL, ranges over a wider journalistic field. He concentrates on the ups and downs of a number of the publications that now make up the Mirror Group—the vast combine of which Mr. Cudlipp is joint managing director.

He tells how the Sunday Pictorial (which he edited before the war) and the Mirror again and again " shone the green light "—by printing views of subjects which had hitherto been taboo. He draws sharply-focused portraits of giants like Cecil King, Lord Beaverbrook, and Lord Northcliffe, and he gives a blow-by-blow account of the Mirror Group's titanic takeover battle with Roy Thomson, as a result of which the Mirror bought Odhams Press last year.

Of all Mr. Cudlipp's anecdotes, perhaps the most startling shows that an editor does not always have to hunt for news. Once a man walked into the Daily Mirror building, sat down, explained exactly how he had just killed two people, and waited for the police to take him away!

Anybody interested—and who isn't ?—in observing at close quarters the wild animals that stalk through the Fleet Street jungle will find plenty to amuse and provoke him in this stimulating new book.

D.H-D.

(Published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 21s.)

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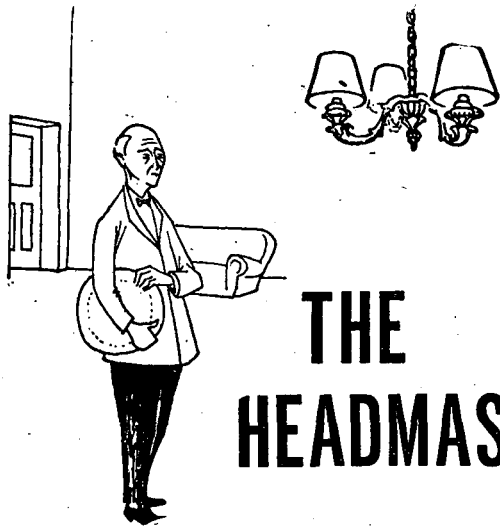

THE HEADMASTER

By MICHAEL GILBERT

THE master spies at work in this country numbered, last year, four. They were known, to Intelligence, as the Language Master, the Science Master, the Games Master, and, in some undefined position of authority of all of them, the Headmaster.

Since the Portsmouth affair there have been but two. The Language Master was behind bars, and the Games Master had retired to Switzerland. The Science Master was still at his shadowy work in the Midlands; and the Headmaster was in the London area.

When it is said that Intelligence knew about these men, it must be understood that it was a matter of analysis and deduction rather than knowledge. A lot of confidential information was reaching the other side, much of it unimportant, but some of it highly important. Most of such items could be traced to their sources. And the lines drawn from these sources pointed inwards and came together somewhere in the centre of the Metropolis.

"If I had to create the Headmaster," said Mr. Fortescue, "in the way that a scientist creates a megalosaurus, from small

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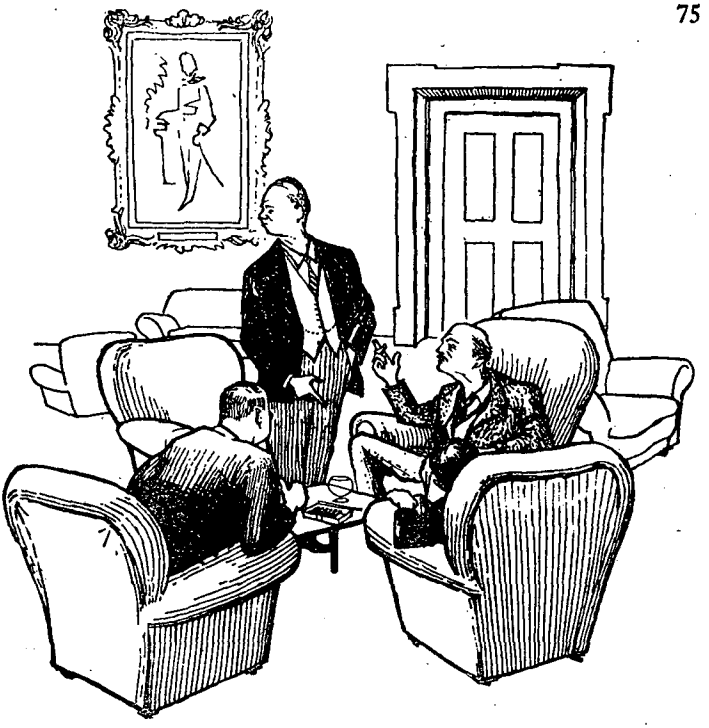

fragments of tooth and bone, I should have to construct someone with the combined knowledge of a cabinet minister, a senior Civil Servant, and a don."

"An all-round man," said Mr. Calder. "Have we any hopeful line at all?"

"We have a line," said Mr. Fortescue. "I'm not sure if it's hopeful or not. Craven has disappeared."

"John Craven? I've seen nothing in the papers—"

"It will be there. Somewhat prominently, I'm afraid."

Since John Craven was a Queen's Counsel and Recorder of a Kentish Borough, this seemed only too probable.

"He went down from his Chambers, by car, on Saturday morning to his house at Charing. He was planning to return to town on Sunday night. The first time we knew anything was wrong was when he failed to turn up for a conference on Monday morning."

"Yesterday."

"Yes. We got busy at once, of course."

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"Of course," said Mr. Calder. John Craven was one of his oldest friends. He was perfectly aware that he had another occupation besides his legal one.

"His car was still in the garage of his Charing house. The daily woman, who cooks for him and cleans the house, saw him start out for a walk after lunch on Sunday."

"He was a great walker," said Mr. Calder. He thought of his old friend, striding along a woodland path, red-cheeked, white-topped, head bent forward, stick swinging. "Have you any reason to connect it with the Headmaster?"

"Two reasons," said Mr. Fortescue. "First, Craven was one of three men who had been specially assigned to locating him. He had had, so far, absolutely no apparent success. Had he found out anything, he would of course have reported it at once."

"Of course," said Mr. Calder.

"However, the path that he was treading must have taken him, unknowingly, very close to the man. Too close for his comfort."

"You mentioned two reasons."

"It has the feel of a professional job," said Mr. Fortescue. "Carefully arranged, perfectly executed."

"I expect you're right," said Mr. Calder. He had never known Fortescue wrong in any important matter. "Just what would you like me to do?"

"The first thing must be to find Craven. I'd like it done, if possible, before the news is made public. I have informed our friends in the Special Branch. They can control ordinary police inquiry for a reasonable period. But I don't think we can keep the papers off it for more than forty-eight hours."

"I'll see what I can do," said Mr. Calder. "There was a sister, wasn't there? A widow. What was her name?"

"Mrs. Gordon. I have written down her address and telephone number. A very sensible woman. You should find her a great help."

So Mr. Calder and Mrs. Gordon travelled down to Charing together, and on Charing platform they found reinforcements.

"This is my friend, Mr. Behrens. He is a keen naturalist. I felt that four pairs of eyes would be better than two."

"It's very good of you to take so much trouble," said Mrs. Gordon. "Did you say four—?" She turned and found a great dog had moved up silently behind her. Its head came well above her waist.

"Oh," she said. "He's beautiful."

Rasselas eyed her coldly. For Mr. Calder, who talked to him

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in his own tongue, he would do anything. He had become accustomed to Mr. Behrens, and even allowed himself to be taken by him in his car when he understood from Mr. Behrens' manner that the matter was urgent. But this was the limit of his tolerance.

"I spent a little time on the way down," said Mr. Calder, "working out, with Mrs. Gordon's help, the sort of walks her brother might have taken in the time available. Ah, you've got the maps—good."

Mrs. Gordon said, "Truscott, his head clerk, told me that he planned to be back in London well before dinner. He had some papers to read, and he hated reading after dinner. That would have meant leaving Charing at five at the latest—and he liked to get his own tea before starting back."

"Two hours, almost exactly," said Mr. Calder. "Less, if he wanted, but not more."

"He'd go as far as he could in the time. There were two walks I've been with him which would have fitted in almost exactly. There's not much to choose between them."

They spent a long morning, without result. What had taken the quick-striding barrister two hours to cover, cost them nearly four. There were parts of it—along used roads and past houses—which they could ignore. But the rest had to be studied carefully.

After a quick lunch at a pub, they started on the second round. The path rose almost at once, on a long slant, climbing the downs towards a wood.

"They could have watched him from up there—Mrs. Gordon, by the way, knows what we fear may have happened."

"I knew John did secret work. He didn't talk about it, of course."

"Of course not," said Mr. Calder. The path plunged into the wood—it turned out to be a mere screen of trees—then out again on to the downland.

Rasselas ran free, ahead of them, his tail feathering in the breeze. Occasionally, his nose dipped to the ground and rose again as he ran. He was like a great golden galleon, answering to the first chops of the open sea.

"We won't waste much time here," said Mr. Calder. "It's lonely enough, but it's a lot too open. John had his wits about him. And he carried a gun."

The path turned, now, and ran along the ridgeway. There were small coppices, which were promising, and which they searched carefully, but without success. Rasselas watched them, and from time to time Mr. Calder talked to him.

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"He's not a bloodhound," he explained. "And there's no question of him acting as a tracker. What he's been trained to do is to notice when things are wrong—when they've been moved, or altered. Anyone hiding in the bushes there, for instance, would have upset the pattern of the branches when he came out. Or if something which had been standing in the same place for some time had been shifted, it leaves a mark. That's the sort of thing he notices."

Rasselas sat on his haunches, grinning quietly as he watched Mr. Calder talking.

"He hasn't shown much interest yet," said Mr. Behrens.

"He'll tell us as soon as he sees anything."

They had already covered nearly fifteen miles that day, and were getting tired by the time they came to the deserted farm. The path skirted the farmyard. Under the collapsed Dutch barn, there still lay a few trusses of grey and mouldy hay. The tiles were off the roof, daylight showed through the walls. The nettle was in command of the garden and yard.

Rasselas padded quietly round the back of the house, and when he did not reappear Mr. Calder went to look for him. He was sitting on his haunches, still as stone, looking at a rusty rain-water tank, propped on its side against the broken brick wall.

In the tank, his knees to his chin, was John Craven.

"There were three men involved," said Mr. Calder, to Mr. Fortescue. "And you were right. The planning was meticulous. As John reached the corner of the farm, one man, directly ahead of him, attracted his attention and made him stop. There were two other men, one on each side, behind him, and hidden. One hit him to stun him, the other caught his arms as he fell and held him while the first one hit him again, this time hard enough to break his neck."

"How do you know all this?"

"Rasselas worked it out for me," said Mr. Calder. And, after a pause, "What next?"

"The finding of the body will be given to the press. In the public version the body will be found by hikers, *behind* the tank, not in it. Craven's walking habits will be mentioned. It will be strongly suggested that Craven felt faint, sat down to rest, and died of heart failure. There will be an inquest, of course. But the only evidence will be of identity. And an adjournment for—how long will you require?"

"It depends what I have to do," said Mr. Calder cautiously.

"The Headmaster took a grave risk in acting as he did. He must have felt that Craven represented a very real danger. And

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yet, curiously, Craven didn't know it. If he had suspected anything, he would have reported at once."

"Yes," said Mr. Calder.

"What you will have to do is to trace Craven's movements, his professional and social contacts, and try to discover why he should have become so dangerous without realising it. Would a month be enough?"

Mr. Calder said, "I ought to know by the end of a month, if there is any chance of success . . ."

The first person he called on was Truscott. His head clerk, Truscott, and his sister, Mrs. Gordon, were the only two people who knew that John Craven was more than a very successful barrister; and of the two, Truscott had been deeper in his confidence.

Mr. Calder sat in the barrister's neat room in Crown Office Row, overlooking the lawn of Middle Temple Gardens. It was a room walled with books. There were other books, marked with slips of paper, on a side table; a pile of briefs which would now have to be returned; a book diary with professional appointments; a flat desk diary with private engagements; and a locked cabinet of personal papers.

"He was a very methodical man," said Truscott.

"I hope it will make our job a bit easier," said Mr. Calder. He had explained to Truscott what he planned to do. "We'll start by listing everyone he saw privately in the last six months. The names will be in his private engagement book."

"I think this will help us, too," said Truscott. He produced, from the cabinet, a folder marked PERSONAL. "He kept all private letters here, and carbons of his replies. If he answered them by hand, he often made a spare copy."

"We'll use one as a check on the other. As a further cross-check, would you get your telephonist to give us a note of any numbers he called. If she doesn't keep a record, the post office could, at least, give us the toll calls."

"She keeps a record," said Truscott. "I'm not sure if it goes back six months, but I'll find out."

There followed a fortnight of work as hard and demanding as any that Mr. Calder could remember. He sat at John Craven's desk from nine o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock at night. He was introduced to the other members of the Chambers as Craven's literary executor; Craven had been a considerable contributor to all sorts of journals, on legal and non-legal topics, and had published two books of essay and reminiscence. Many of the friends whom Mr. Calder so patiently checked came from Fleet Street and New Fetter Lane.

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The professional contacts caused little trouble. With Truscott's assistance he was able, in the first two days, to identify and put on one side the various solicitors who consulted Craven professionally.

This left a clutter of personal friends, relations, literary contacts, people he had met in the course of his political work, tradesmen, club acquaintances, and odd members of the public who will write to anyone whose name is known and who is foolish enough to have his address in the telephone book. A Christmas card list, with notes on some of the recipients, proved invaluable.

After a week of such work Mr. Calder felt so limp that he thought that he might be in for a bout of flu. But he was not dissatisfied with his results.

"There are three people," he said, "that I'd like to concentrate on. Any one of them could have access to secret information. And all three are new acquaintances."

Truscott looked over his shoulder at the names he had jotted down.

"Sir George Gould," he said. "He's something in the Treasury, I believe. Mr. Craven met him over his work with the Inns of Court Conservative Association. They were both concerned in the drafting of a new Rating Bill. General Hamish Fairside. He works in the War Office."

"Military Intelligence," said Mr. Calder.

"Freddie Lake. The name is familiar, but I don't think I ever met him."

"You're lucky," said Mr. Calder. "I have."

In the course of a long career, Sir Frederick Lake had held every conceivable post in the Foreign Service, had visited every known country in the world, and had developed into the most compulsive bore of his generation.

"I'd better start with General Fairside," said Mr. Calder. "I have a nodding acquaintance with him. Let's have a look at *Who's Who.*

"Clubs. United Service, Naval and Military, and the Hambone." He turned the pages until he came to *Gould. George Anstruther, educated Winchester and New College, Oxford.* His clubs were the United University Club—and the Hambone.

"This is too true to be good," said Mr. Calder. With fumbling fingers he turned to the letter L.

Sir Frederick Lake belonged to no fewer than six clubs. The Hambone was fourth on the list.

Mr. Calder sat, turning this odd coincidence over in his mind A further thought struck him.

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"Did Mr. Craven belong to any clubs?"

"He was a member of the Travellers', sir."

"No other ones?"

"Fairly recently, I remember, he was talking about joining the Hambone. But you know what these clubs are like, sir. There was some opposition, somewhere, so of course he withdrew his candidature."

"I wonder," said Mr. Calder. "I wonder."

The Hambone Club in Carver Street is the offspring of that eccentric aristocrat, Sir Rawnsley Clayton. Having been turned out of the Athenæum for giving dinner there to a troupe of clowns, he had founded it as a place where he could meet his more Bohemian acquaintances. It was still much used by actors and writers, but had acquired a solid addition of politicians who found the Carlton too stuffy and of soldiers who found the Senior too exclusive.

It was to the Hambone Club that Mr. Calder was now making his way. Three weeks had passed since the death of John Craven. Mr. Calder had not hurried. The quarry he was hunting, if it existed at all, would await his coming.

He was conscious, as he walked through the misty, lamplit streets, of a feeling close to guilt. He was breaking one of the oldest rules of the game. For so slight, so intangible, so elusive had been the clue upon which he had stumbled, that he had not yet dared to record his suspicions. Possibly "suspicions" was too concrete a word altogether. It was a breath, a whisper, the first faint stirring of apprehension.

Yet when General Fairside, their acquaintanceship skilfully renewed, had invited him to dinner at the Hambone, and had mentioned, casually, that George Gould might be joining them for a drink afterwards, he had paused to consider matters very carefully. In the end, he had slipped into the special pocket of his coat an automatic pistol. It had—like its owner—a short, stout body; and it was equipped with a most efficient silencer. The moment he had put it into his pocket, he had felt the extravagance of the action. But he had allowed it to remain.

Mr. Calder found his host warming himself in front of a hospitable fire of logs.

"Nice of you to come out on a night like this," he boomed. "What are you drinking? Nonsense. Must have something before we start eating. Take away the taste of the food."

Over an excellent dinner they talked about the Service Charity in which Mr. Calder was interested, and which was the ostensible reason for their meeting; and about old friends, in the Army

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and out of it. The General had been a subaltern in a Rifle Regiment, which had shared a particularly unpleasant section of the line with Mr. Calder's Regiment in 1918.

"Sensible of you not to stay on in the Army," said the General. "No future in it."

"I wouldn't say that," said Mr. Calder.

"Oh, it suited someone like me. I meant for a brainy chap like you. By the way, what *did* you go in for?"

"Import and export," said Mr. Calder promptly. "What excellent Burgundy this is."

"I'm glad you like it. They know how to buy wine in this club. *And* how to look after it. Barlow! My guest likes the Corton."

Barlow, who was the doyen of the Hambone staff, smiled politely.

"I am glad you enjoyed it, sir," he said. "I had half a bottle with my own dinner." He sailed off down the room to attend to a thick, black-haired man, who had just come in.

"That's Sir George Gould, isn't it?" asked Mr. Calder.

"That's him. Doesn't look like a senior Treasury official, does he?"

"To be absolutely candid, I think he looks like a retired boxer."

"Not bad. Not bad at all. I fought him myself, in the first inter-regimental tournament after the war. He was in the Sixtieth. A dirty fighter. We'll lure him along with a glass of brandy after dinner."

No lure was needed. Sir George came over, as drawn by a magnet, was introduced to Mr. Calder, and was given a large brandy. Mr. Calder settled himself in one of the large leather armchairs which make the coffee room of the Hambone one of the best sitting-out places in London. Sir George, he reflected, would be a very difficult man to fool. His had been a lifetime of committees, and desk-work, a lifetime of watching the wheels go round, and, occasionally, of making them turn.

He was in an unbuttoned mood now, telling stories of Under-Secretaries and their ways, of experiences at the bar of the House of Commons, of the foibles of his own master. Another brandy, thought Mr. Calder, and he might become thunderingly indiscreet. Or would he? There was an inner wall of cold reserve in those grey eyes which were turned upon Mr. Calder from time to time.

It was quite late when the General said, "Hullo, Freddie, come and join us," and Mr. Calder looked up and saw the tall, spare figure of Sir Frederick Lake bearing down on them.

A sense of completion seized Mr. Calder. It was the feeling

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which assails a scientist when, at the end of a long and difficult series of calculations, full of imponderables and unknown quantities, he feels the shifting ground hardening under his feet at last. It was a sense of satisfaction, but mingled with alarm.

He had known that Sir Frederick would come. His arrival had been part of a ritual. How often, he wondered, had these three men met together in this way, in this place, at this hour of night?

Mr. Calder shifted in his seat, and felt the weight of the silenced automatic pressing against his stomach.

"I think we could all do with another drink," said Sir Frederick. "What would you like? Port or brandy? George? General? And you, sir?"

"It's too late for formal introductions," said the General. "But this is Mr. Calder. He's an old friend of mine. And he knew John Craven very well indeed."

The diplomat bowed, very slightly, towards Mr. Calder, and said, "A sad business. All the same, when it happens, it's not a bad way out, is it?"

Mr. Calder felt three pairs of eyes upon him, and his lips were dry. He said, "I suppose not, no."

"In the open air," said the General. "On a Sunday afternoon walk. Quite suddenly. I'd settle for that myself, eh?"

"If I am destined to die quite suddenly," said Sir George, "I think I should like it to be when I was in the box of the House of Commons at question time. Imagine the look on the Minister's face—"

The three men laughed.

Sir Frederick, still standing, said, "May I have your orders, gentlemen?"

Sir George and the General said, "Brandy," in perfect unison.

Mr. Calder said, "At this time of night, I'm very fond of a half pint of bitter."

"An excellent choice," said Sir Frederick, and rang the bell. "In certain circumstances, the grain and the grape go very well together. I can only suggest one amendment. You should have a pint not a half pint."

"I will fall in with your suggestion," said Mr. Calder.

The benign figure of Barlow appeared out of the gloom. Sir Frederick gave the order.

"I sometimes wonder," said the General, "if Barlow ever goes to bed. If you want a drink at any time between ten o'clock and four in the morning, he always brings it himself."

"He sends the younger waiters home," said Sir George, "and sits, in solitary splendour, in a great padded chair, in a sort

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of pantry next to the kitchen. On one occasion, when the electric bell was out of order, I penetrated to his lair."

"I picture him," said the General, "as leading a Regency life, going to bed at six in the morning and getting up at lunchtime—"

This speculation was cut short by the reappearance of Barlow. He was bearing, on a silver salver, three glasses of brandy and a half-pint tankard of beer.

"Barlow," said Sir Frederick, "that's the first time in twenty years I have known you make a mistake. I said a pint."

Even in the gloom Mr. Calder could see the man flush. He said hastily, "That's quite all right. Don't think of changing it. It'll do me very nicely."

In truth, he had only one idea, now; to get the three men out of the club. Patience, patience, and still more patience. Mr. Calder, who had played many waiting games in his life, had rarely been tried higher than he was that night.

But all things must have an end, even Sir Frederick Lake's anecdotes. Two o'clock was striking as Mr. Calder followed his three hosts down the steps of the Hambone Club, past the empty porter's hutch, through the great doors, and out into the street.

There were three cars there. Mr. Calder said, "I won't trouble any of you for a lift. My flat is only ten minutes away, and I'd welcome the walk. And thank you, General, once more, for a most enjoyable evening."

As soon as he had turned the corner he paused, drew into a doorway, and waited. He could hear the three voices; a laugh, a shouted good night; the slamming of car doors; three separate cars starting and driving away. Then silence returned.

While they had been sitting in the club, the mist had thickened. Since he had to move, and more quickly now, mist might be a useful ally.

He turned about, and walked back the way he had come. The porter's hutch was still empty. One of Barlow's self-imposed duties would be locking up when the last member had taken himself home to bed.

The lights in the inner hall had been reduced to one reading-lamp. From the walls the pictures of actors and actresses looked down from their heavy gold frames. Their incurious eyes followed Mr. Calder as he tiptoed across the floor.

A melodrama, thought Mr. Calder. In three acts. Act one, a deserted farmstead. Act two, a barrister's Chambers. Act three, a London club.

He pulled on a pair of cotton gloves before opening the baize-covered door. His rubbersoled shoes hissed softly on the flagstones.

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The club kitchen lay at the end of the passage. The door was open, and from a room leading off it a light showed. Mr. Calder drifted across, breath held, silent as thistledown. He pushed the door open with his gun.

Barlow was not sitting in the great padded chair which the General had described. He was standing beside it, working at the leather upholstery.

" Good evening, Headmaster," said Mr. Calder.

" I recognised you when you came here this evening." The voice was harsh. The tones of the wellbred club servant had disappeared with the deferential smile. The face was grinning. But it was the grin of a death mask. " I should have taken steps at once. First Craven, then you."

" I suppose it's no use me telling you that Craven suspected nothing. That you killed him to no purpose."

" I could not afford to take a chance."

Mr. Calder said, " I imagine there is some sort of concealed microphone in the coffee room, behind where the eminent gossips sit over their brandies? And a listening-apparatus in this room? "

" You imagine correctly. The microphone and receiver are removable. Only the wiring is permanent."

" And the receiver is somewhere in that chair? "

" It was. I have removed it. In ten minutes, I should have had the whole apparatus dismantled."

" It is interesting to reflect," said Mr. Calder, " that had Sir Frederick Lake indulged in one more reminiscence, you would have got away with all this."

" I should like to know how you found out."

" Oh, it was a stupid thing," said Mr. Calder. " You brought me the half pint of beer which you *overheard* me asking for, instead of the pint which Sir Frederick actually told you to bring. An incredible mistake for an experienced club servant."

" Ah! " said the man. He raised his hand, without haste, to his mouth. The stench of cyanide filled the room. As Mr. Calder watched, the body arched, clung for a moment with hands braced to the chairback, then emptied itself into a black pool on the floor.

Before he left, Mr. Calder removed the microphone and the headset. The wiring he left. It would attract no notice. London clubs are full of aged and inexplicable wiring.

He was in bed by three, and asleep ten minutes later. His influenza seemed to be better.

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Cherry Compôte

A cherry lip, a bonny eye . . .
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Richard* III

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride,
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom,
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodland I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.
A. E. HOUSMAN, *Loveliest of Trees*

Cherry Pairs

She [Cath Johnson] the youngest, was eating pale red-orange cherries and hanging others, in pairs, on her small delicate ears, under close brown cushions of side hair . . .

" Dancing tonight, Phebe? " Poll said.

" I might."

" I think I will if Harry'll take me," Poll said.

All of them except Phebe Harlow laughed about Harry. Everybody knew about Harry. Harry came across by the field once a day, perhaps twice, a gnome on an orange tractor, a little man with a flat black head and piercing doleful blue eyes that searched the skirts of the women and roved along the line of bodies bowed against cross-winds as they hoed the fields.

" Ask him—go on, Poll, ask him! " they said. " He'll be by at one o'clock. He'll be coming by to the hay-field."

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" See me dancing with Harry," Poll said. " His head wouldn't come up to me belt. I'd laugh like a drain."

" See what he says—ask him," they said.

Pairs of cherries danced deep orange on Cath Johnson's ears and Phebe Harlow shook back her hair from her face and fingered pale gold strands of it left shining on the comb. Wind caught her hair and separated it suddenly into transparency, letting sunlight through it, turning it more white than yellow.

" You want to be careful about laughing at men," she said. " That's the way it starts."

H. E. BATES, *Daughters of the Village*

" Cherries, ripe cherries! "
The old woman cried,
In her snowy white apron
And basket beside,
And the little boys came,
Eyes shining, cheeks red,
To buy bags of cherries,
To eat with their bread.

WALTER DE LA MARE, *Bread and Cherries*

Winter Cherry

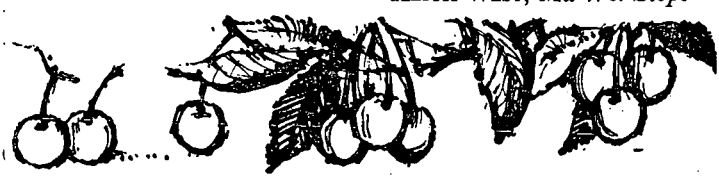
But when it was just light enough to see the clear outlines of her window, Winter Cherry woke. She woke slowly, luxuriously, and without question in her mind. How strange it was to greet the morning thus, not alone! How curious to know at once, instinctively, that she now had a duty to rouse her husband . . .

She shivered, wholly with delight, and moved Ah Lai's arm from her neck, laying it between them . . .

Ah Lai said: " It is absurdly early: come back here. Many a husband has wisely sent his wife back to her parents because she woke him too early. I am still quite sleepy. You have put some charcoal in the k'ang? Then come and keep me warm."

" Fetch me," she answered, and when he had done so and they were both warm again, she said: " You are not in the least like what I expected."

KEITH WEST, *Ma Wei Slope*



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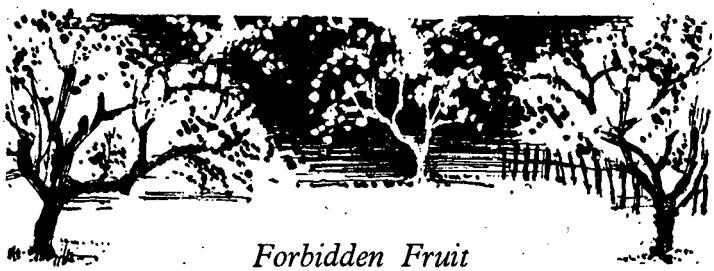

Forbidden Fruit

Her eyes like angels watch them still,
Her brows like bended bows do stand,
Threatening with piercing frowns to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred cherries to come nigh
Till " Cherry-ripe " themselves do cry.

THOMAS CAMPION, *There is a Garden*

Chérie !

The old woman lived at peace with her daughter, who was called Cherry, because she liked cherries better than any other kind of food, and would eat scarcely anything else. Now, her poor old mother had no garden: and no money to buy cherries every day for her daughter; and at last there was no other plan left but to go to a neighbouring nunnery garden and beg the finest she could get from the nuns; for she dare not let her daughter go out by herself, as she was very pretty . . .

The Prince came one day to the town where Cherry and her mother lived; and as they passed along the street, saw the fair maiden standing at the window combing her long and beautiful locks of hair . . .

THE BROTHERS GRIMM, *Cherry, or the Frog Bride*

Under the long dark boughs, like jewels red
In the hair of an Eastern girl
Hang strings of crimson cherries, as if had bled
Blood-drops beneath each curl . . .

Against the haystack a girl stands laughing at me,
Cherries hung round her ears.
Offers me her scarlet fruit: I will see
If she has any tears.

D. H. LAWRENCE, *Cherry Robbers*

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This month's reprint by readers' request

MEMENTO

BY O. HENRY

MISS LYNNETTE D'ARMANDE turned her back on Broadway. This was but tit for tat, because Broadway had often done the same thing to Miss D'Armande. Still, the "tats" seemed to have it, for the ex-leading lady of the "Reaping the Whirlwind" Company had everything to ask of Broadway, while there was no vice versa.

So Miss Lynnette D'Armande turned the back of her chair to her window that overlooked Broadway, and sat down to stitch in time the lisle-thread heel of a black silk stocking. The tumult and glitter of the roaring Broadway beneath her window had no charm for her; what she greatly desired was the stifling air of a dressing-room on that fairyland street and the roar of an audience gathered in that capricious quarter. In the meantime, those stockings must not be neglected. Silk does wear out so, but—after all, isn't it just the only goods there is?

The Hotel Thalia looks on Broadway as Marathon looks on the sea. It stands like a gloomy cliff above the whirlpool where the tides of two great thoroughfares clash. Here the player-bands gather at the end of their wanderings, to loosen the buskin and dust the sock. Thick in the streets around it are the booking-offices, theatres, agents, schools, and the lobster-palaces to which those thorny paths lead.

Wandering through the eccentric halls of the dim and fusty Thalia, you seem to have found yourself in some great ark or caravan about to sail or fly, or roll away on wheels. About the house lingers a sense of unrest, of expectation, of transientness, even of anxiety and apprehension. The halls are a labyrinth. Without a guide you wander like a lost soul in a Sam Loyd puzzle.

Turning any corner, a dressing-sack or a cul-de-sac may bring you up short. You meet alarming tragedians stalking in bath-robes in search of rumoured bathrooms. From hundreds of

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rooms come the buzz of talk, scraps of new and old songs, and the ready laughter of the convened players.

Summer has come; their companies have disbanded, and they take their rest in their favourite caravanserai, while they besiege the managers for engagements for the coming season.

At this hour of the afternoon the day's work of tramping the rounds of the agents' offices is over. Past you, as you ramble distractedly through the mossy halls, flit audible visions of houris, with veiled, starry eyes, flying tag-ends of things, and a swish of silk, bequeathing to the dull hallways an odour of gaiety and a memory of frangipane. Serious young comedians, with versatile Adam's apples, gather in doorways and talk of Booth. Far-reaching from somewhere comes the smell of ham and red cabbage, and the crash of dishes on the American plan.

The indeterminate hum of life in the Thalia is enlivened by the discreet popping—at reasonable and salubrious intervals—of beer-bottle corks. Thus punctuated, life in the genial hostel scans easily—the comma being the favourite mark, semicolons frowned upon, and periods barred.

Miss D'Armande's room was a small one. There was room for her rocker between the dresser and the washstand if it were placed longitudinally. On the dresser were its usual accoutrements, plus the ex-leading lady's collected souvenirs of road engagements and photographs of her dearest and best professional friends.

At one of these photographs she looked twice or thrice as she darned, and smiled friendlily.

"I'd like to know where Lee is just this minute," she said, half aloud.

If you had been privileged to view the photograph thus flattered, you would have thought at the first glance that you saw the picture of a many-petalled white flower blown through the air by a storm. But the floral kingdom was not responsible for that swirl of petalous whiteness.

You saw the filmy, brief skirt of Miss Rosalie Ray as she made a complete heels-over-head turn in her wistaria-entwined swing, far out from the stage, high above the heads of the audience. You saw the camera's inadequate representation of the graceful, strong kick, with which she, at this exciting moment, sent flying, high and far, the yellow silk garter that each evening spun from her agile limb and descended upon the delighted audience below.

You saw, too, amid the black-clothed, mainly masculine patrons of select vaudeville a hundred hands raised with the hope of staying the flight of the brilliant aerial token.

Forty weeks of the best circuits this act had brought Miss

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Rosalie Ray for each of two years. She did other things during her twelve minutes—a song and dance, imitations of two or three actors who are but imitations of themselves, and a balancing feat with a step-ladder and feather duster; but when the blossom-decked swing was let down from the flies, and Miss Rosalie sprang smiling into the seat, with the golden circlet conspicuous in the place whence it was soon to slide and become a soaring and coveted guerdon—then it was that the audience rose in its seat as a single man—or presumably so—and endorsed the speciality that made Miss Ray's name a favourite in the booking-offices.

At the end of the two years Miss Ray suddenly announced to her dear friend, Miss D'Armande, that she was going to spend the summer at an antediluvian village on the north shore of Long Island, and that the stage would see her no more.

Seventeen minutes after Miss Lynnette D'Armande had expressed her wish to know the whereabouts of her old chum, there were sharp raps at her door.

Doubt not that it was Rosalie Ray. At the shrill command to enter she did so, with something of a tired flutter, and dropped a heavy handbag on the floor. Upon my word, it was Rosalie in a loose, travel-stained automobileless coat, closely-tied brown veil with yard-long flying ends, grey walking-suit, and tan Oxfords with lavender over-gaiters.

When she threw off her veil and hat, you saw a pretty enough face, now flushed and disturbed by some unusual emotion, and restless, large eyes with discontent marring their brightness. A heavy pile of dull auburn hair, hastily put up, was escaping in crinkly waving strands and curling small locks from the confining combs and pins.

The meeting of the two was not marked by the effusion vocal, gymnastical, osculatory, and catechetical that distinguishes the greetings of their unprofessional sisters in society. There was a brief clinch, two simultaneous labial dabs, and they stood on the same footing of the old days. Very much like the short salutations of soldiers or of travellers in foreign wilds are the welcomes between the strollers at the corners of their crisscross roads.

"I've got the hall-room two flights up above yours," said Rosalie, "but I came straight to see you before going up. I didn't know you were here till they told me."

"I've been in since the last of April," said Lynnette. "And I'm going on the road with a 'Fatal Inheritance' Company. We open next week in Elizabeth. I thought you'd quit the stage, Lee. Tell me about yourself."

Rosalie settled herself with a skilful wriggle on the top of

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Miss D'Armande's wardrobe trunk, and leaned her head against the papered wall. From long habit, thus can peripatetic leading ladies and their sisters make themselves as comfortable as though the deepest armchairs embraced them.

"I'm going to tell you, Lynn," she said with a strangely sardonic and yet carelessly resigned look on her youthful face. "And then tomorrow I'll strike the old Broadway trail again, and wear some more paint off the chairs in the agents' offices. If anybody had told me any time in the last three months up to four o'clock this afternoon that I'd ever listen to that 'Leave-your-name-and-address' rot of the booking bunch again, I'd have given 'em the real Mrs. Fiske laugh. Loan me a handkerchief, Lynn. Gee, but those Long Island trains are fierce! I've got enough soft coal cinders on my face to go on and play Topsy without using the cork. And speaking of corks—got anything to drink, Lynn?"

Miss D'Armande opened a door of the washstand and took out a bottle.

"There's nearly a pint of Manhattan. There's a cluster of carnations in the drinking-glass, but—"

"Oh, pass the bottle. Save the glass for company. Thanks! That hits the spot. The same to you. My first drink in three months!

"Yes, Lynn, I quit the stage at the end of last season. I quit it because I was sick of the life. And especially because my heart and soul were sick of men—of the kind of men we stage people have to be up against. You know what the game is to us—it's a fight against 'em all the way down the line, from the manager who wants us to try his new motor-car to the billposters who want to call us by our front names.

"And the men we have to meet after the show are the worst of all. The stage-door kind, and the manager's friends who take us to supper, and show their diamonds, and talk about seeing Dan and Dave and Charlie for us. They're beasts, and I hate 'em.

"I tell you, Lynn, it's the girls like us on the stage that ought to be pitied. It's the girls from good homes that are honestly ambitious and work hard to rise in the profession, but never do get there. You hear a lot of sympathy sloshed around on chorus girls and their fifteen dollars a week. Piffle! There ain't a sorrow in the chorus that a lobster cannot heal.

"If there's any tears to shed, let 'em fall for the actress that gets a salary from thirty to forty-five dollars a week for taking a leading part in a bum show. She knows she'll never do any better; but she hangs on for years, hoping for the chance that never comes.

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"And the fool plays we have to work in! Having another girl roll you around the stage by the hind legs in a Wheelbarrow Chorus in a musical comedy is drama dignified with the idiotic things I've had to do in the thirty-centers.

"But what I hated most was the men—the men leering and blathering at you across tables, trying to buy you with Wurzburger or Extra Dry, according to their estimate of your price. And the men in the audiences, clapping, yelling, snarling, crowding, writhing, gloating—like a lot of wild beasts, with their eyes fixed on you, ready to eat you up if you come in reach of their claws. Oh, how I hate 'em!

"Well, I'm not telling you much about myself, am I, Lynn?

"I had two hundred dollars saved up, and I cut the stage the first of the summer. I went over on Long Island, and found the sweetest little village that ever was, called Soundport, right on the water. I was going to spend the summer there, and study up on elocution, and try to get a class in the fall. There was an old widow lady with a cottage near the beach who sometimes rented a room or two just for company, and she took me in. She had another boarder, too—the Reverend Arthur Lyle.

"Yes, he was the headliner. You're on, Lynn. I'll tell you all of it in a minute. It's only a one-act play.

"The first time he walked on, Lynn, I felt myself going; the first lines he spoke, he had me. He was different from the men in the audiences. He was tall and slim, and you never heard him come in the room, but you *felt* him. He had a face like a picture of a knight—like one of that Round Table bunch—and a voice like a cello solo. And his manners!

"Lynn, if you'd take John Drew in his best drawing-room scene and compare the two you'd have John arrested for disturbing the peace.

"I'll spare you the particulars; but in less than a month Arthur and I were engaged. He preached at a little one-night stand of a Methodist church. There was to be a parsonage the size of a lunch-wagon, and hens and honeysuckles when we were married. Arthur used to preach to me a good deal about Heaven, but he never could get my mind quite off those honeysuckles and hens.

"No; I didn't tell him I'd been on the stage. I hated the business and all that went with it; I'd cut it out for ever, and I didn't see any use of stirring things up. I was a good girl, and I didn't have anything to confess, except being an elocutionist, and that was about all the strain my conscience would stand.

"Oh, I tell you, Lynn, I was happy. I sang in the choir and

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attended the sewing society, and recited that Annie Laurie thing with the whistling stunt in it, 'in a manner bordering upon the professional,' as the weekly village newspaper reported it. And Arthur and I went rowing, and walking in the woods, and clamming, and that poky little village seemed to me the best place in the world. I'd have been happy to live there always, too, if—

"But one morning old Mrs. Gurley, the widow lady, got gossipy while I was helping her to string beans on the back porch, and began to gush information, as folks who rent out their rooms usually do. Mr. Lyle was her idea of a saint on earth—as he was mine, too. She went over all his virtues and graces, and wound up by telling me that Arthur had had an extremely romantic love affair, not long before, that had ended unhappily. She didn't seem to be on to the details, but she knew that he had been hit pretty hard. He was paler and thinner, she said, and he had some kind of a remembrance keepsake of the lady in a little rosewood box that he kept locked in his desk drawer in his study.

"'Several times,' says she, 'I've seen him gloomerin' over that box of evenings, and he always locks it up right away if anybody comes into the room.'

"Well, you can imagine how long it was before I got Arthur by the wrist and led him downstage and hissed in his ear.

"That same afternoon we were lazing around in a boat among the water-lilies at the edge of the bay.

"'Arthur,' says I, 'you never told me you'd had another love affair. But Mrs. Gurley did,' I went on, to let him know I knew. I hate to hear a man lie.

"'Before you came,' says he, looking me frankly in the eye, 'there was a previous affection—a strong one. Since you know of it, I will be perfectly candid with you.'

"'I am waiting,' says I.

"'My dear Ida,' says Arthur—of course, I went by my real name while I was in Soundport—'this former affection was a spiritual one, in fact. Although the lady aroused my deepest sentiments, and was, as I thought, my ideal woman, I never met her, and never spoke to her. It was an ideal love. My love for you, while no less ideal, is different. You wouldn't let that come between us.'

"'Was she pretty?' I asked.

"'She was very beautiful,' said Arthur.

"'Did you see her often?' I asked.

"'Something like a dozen times,' says he.

"'Always from a distance?' says I.

"'Always from quite a distance,' says he.

"'And you loved her?' I asked.

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" ' She seemed my ideal of beauty and grace—and soul,' says Arthur.

" ' And this keepsake that you keep under lock and key, and moon over at times, is that a remembrance from her? '

" ' A memento,' says Arthur, ' that I have treasured.'

" ' Did she send it to you? '

" ' It came to me from her,' says he.

" ' In a roundabout way? ' I asked.

" ' Somewhat roundabout,' says he, ' and yet rather direct.'

" ' Why didn't you ever meet her? ' I asked. ' Were your positions in life so different? '

" ' She was far above me,' says Arthur. ' Now, Ida,' he goes on, ' this is all of the past. You're not going to be jealous, are you? '

" ' Jealous! ' says I. ' Why, man, what are you talking about? It makes me think ten times as much of you as I did before I knew about it.'

" And it did, Lynn—if you can understand it. That ideal love was a new one on me, but it struck me as being the most beautiful and glorious thing I'd ever heard of. Think of a man loving a woman he'd never even spoken to, and being faithful just to what his mind and heart pictured her. Oh, it sounded great to me. The men I'd always known come at you with either diamonds, knock-out-drops, or a raise of salary—and their ideals!—well, we'll say no more.

" Yes, it made me think more of Arthur than I did before. I couldn't be jealous of that far-away divinity that he used to worship, for I was going to have him myself. And I began to look upon him as a saint on earth, just as old lady Gurley did.

" About four o'clock this afternoon a man came to the house for Arthur to go and see somebody that was sick among his church bunch. Old lady Gurley was taking her afternoon snore on a couch, so that left me pretty much alone.

" In passing by Arthur's study I looked in, and saw his bunch of keys hanging in the drawer of his desk, where he'd forgotten 'em. Well, I guess we're all to the Mrs. Bluebeard now and then, ain't we, Lynn? I made up my mind I'd have a look at that memento he kept so secret. Not that I cared where it was—it was just curiosity.

" While I was opening the drawer I imagined one or two things it might be. I thought it might be a dried rosebud she'd dropped down to him from a balcony, or maybe a picture of her he'd cut out of a magazine, she being so high up in the world.

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"I opened the drawer, and there was the rosewood casket about the size of a gent's collar-box. I found the little key in the bunch that fitted and unlocked it and raised the lid.

"I took one look at the memento, and then I went to my room and packed my trunk. I threw a few things into my grip, gave my hair a flirt or two with a side-comb, put on my hat, and went in and gave the old lady's foot a kick. I'd tried awfully hard to use proper and correct language while I was there for Arthur's sake, and I had the habit down pat, but it left me then.

"'Stop sawing gourds,' says I, 'and sit up and take notice. The ghost's about to walk. I'm going away from here, and I owe you eight dollars. The expressman will call for my trunk.'

"I handed her the money.

"'Dear me, Miss Crosby!' says she. 'Is anything wrong? I thought you were pleased here. Dear me, young women are so hard to understand, and so different from what you expect 'em to be.'

"'You're damn right,' says I. 'Some of 'em are. But you can't say that about men. *When you know one man you know 'em all!* That settles the human race question.'

"And then I caught the four-thirty-eight, soft coal unlimited; and here I am."

"You didn't tell me what was in the box, Lee," said Miss D'Armande anxiously.

"One of those yellow silk garters that I used to kick off my leg into the audience during that old vaudeville swing act of mine. Is there any of the cocktail left, Lynn!"

When Prisoner No. 30664 entered the Ohio State Penitentiary in 1898 to serve a sentence for embezzlement, the gates closed for ever on William Sidney Porter. He started writing short stories under the name of O. Henry. Editors liked them and when his sentence ended, for the world and for him, W. S. Porter was dead . . . Instead, O. Henry emerged, a sheaf of stories under his arm and a ready market waiting for them.

He went to New York, became a full-time author, and immortalised for all time the shadowy, gas-lit streets, rattling cabs, and roaring saloons of New York at the turn of the century. A prolific writer, he averaged a story a week for the ten remaining years of his life and, when he died, left behind a unique collection of writings, down-to-earth, unconventional, rich in irony, pathos, and humour.

There has never been another O. Henry.

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THE LUCK OF TRUCKEE

Bowie did not fear the man
but the devil in him

BY JOHN SALT

LAWYER BOWIE was no stranger to disaster. No man could be who served the unlucky house of Obeig. He had served them well and his father before him. Too well some said—though not in the lawyer's hearing—for what little he got out of it.

Bowie himself was conscious enough of the rewards. A sense of continuity for one, the pride of endurance for another and, that very day, a deep sense of gratitude when he placed the deeds of an unencumbered estate in the hands of Iain Oig Obeig and watched him drive back to Truckee House with Morag Kinsella beside him in the little red sports car.

The Obeig inheritance was a small thing now in terms of land: a few acres of meadow on either side of the burn, a dozen stone cottages in the glen, and the big granite house itself that had kept them all poor. Even the salmon had gone from the burn since the dam began building. All the rest lay hidden beneath a wide, man-made lake that had steadily widened and deepened as the great white buttresses of steel and concrete rose higher. And none of them any loss, those acres of poor Highland soil and sour grass pasted thin on the unforgiving granite. Generations of Obeigs had ravaged and mortgaged them, and only once in every fifty years some younger son would piece and patch and seek to hold on to what was left.

Iain was one such. He had seen the possibilities for hydro-electric power in the landlocked valley long before the authorities scheduled it into the national scheme and put the work in hand. But it was Bowie who really pushed the matter through, haggling dourly over rights of tenure and the price of conveyance under the compulsory purchase order.

It was done now but not without a final struggle. For months the purchase price had been withheld while Bowie advertised across the world for news of Donald Obeig, Iain's elder brother.

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In the week just past the Edinburgh courts had granted a presumption of death and the deal went through.

Bowie, still seated in the land office after Iain's departure, took the full measure of his relief. He had no conscience about Donald and few illusions about what would have happened to the money if he had lived to claim it.

The elder Obeig was a throwback, the same bad blood boiled in him that had wasted Truckee for generations past. He had disappeared ten years back with what money he could find, leaving his own brother half dead from a murderous beating. From Leith a day or so later had come a scrawled, half-contemptuous note to Bowie conveying power of attorney. And after that, silence.

Donald Obeig was probably the only man that Angus Bowie feared; and then not the man but the devil in him that sometimes peered forth from his eyes. Bowie shuddered at the memory and stood up from his seat. The sun setting over Kirrielaw shone through the dusty window and put a halo around his lean white head, a halo that his puritan soul would indignantly have disallowed.

The yard outside was empty at this hour. From somewhere far off came a faint hissing and a pale plume of steam rose eddying against the evening sky. By night the dam was a robot that fed itself under crackling arc lights. Great metal hoppers dominated the skyline, revolving slowly. Every six hours they would tip over and decant their concrete with a thunderous roar that crashed again and re-echoed across the valley.

Bowie, working late on Iain's affairs, would often walk to the window and rest his head against the glass, watching the big-bellied drums resume the vertical while other machinery, gaunt and skeletal, hovered over their yawning mouths and lowered the telescopic metal hoses that delivered the fresh mix.

The sun dipped at last behind Kirrielaw, the shadows rushed down the mountain and filled the valley. Suddenly it was night. The lawyer switched on the reading-lamp over his desk, then opened the top of the stove and began stuffing papers and press clippings in on the glowing coke. The last of the dossier on Donald Obeig fled up the chimney as ash and monoxide gas.

Bowie closed the stove and took his coat and hat from a peg in the wall. He walked to the door and it opened inwards against his hand.

Bowie stood stock still, his jaw slack, the muscles of it aching. A hand came out of the darkness and pushed him quite gently back inside the hut.

A husky voice spoke to him. "You're not wearing so well,

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Angus Bowie. You've less hair and what there is of it is frostier than it was."

Bowie closed his mouth with a snap, opened it again, and managed to speak, but managed no more than a quaver. "Donald, man, I thought you were dead."

"Hoped it, you mean. Have done, man. It's not a ghost you're seeing." He came forward into the light and stood there, smiling. Bowie was a tall man but Obeig crowned his height by a foot and more. The lawyer stared at him and caught his breath, for what stood before him was a ruin.

Obeig's clothes hung loose upon him, they were torn and travel-stained. His arms hung slackly at his sides and Bowie marked how the hands and fingers twitched. Two days' growth of beard blackened his chin and jowls, the skin beneath it was pallid and oedematous, and a multiplicity of tiny purple broken veins patterned his nose and cheeks. Two deep lines that might have been carved with a knife creased the slack flesh on either side of his mouth, and Obeig's teeth, like his fingernails, were blackened and broken.

But some swagger yet remained to the man, his eyes were still young though slatily blue with deep fatigue or drunkenness, and the evil fire that Bowie remembered still burnt in them.

Bowie said, with a return of his habitual dourness, "You're not wearing so well yourself, Donald Obeig, if truth be told."

Obeig took off his shabby grey hat and flung it on the desk. "There's a deal of truth to be spoken this night, Angus Bowie. Sit yourself down there at the desk and we'll begin it."

He turned his back on the lawyer and fished the front of the stove open, warming his hands at it. "I see you've been burning papers, Angus. It's not hard to guess what they were about. Don't you wish you could get rid of the flesh as easily?"

Bowie did not answer. Obeig swung round and staggered slightly as he did so.

"You're not well, Donald?"

Obeig gave him an evil grin. "You said that a mite too eagerly, Angus. If you must know, I've a thundering head on me and I'm chilled to the bone with slogging the road over Kirrielaw. You were always the man for a dram, Angus, though cautious with it as befits a man of the law. You'll have a bottle there in the drawer?"

Bowie opened his desk without a word and pushed a bottle and glass across it. Obeig snatched it eagerly and unscrewed the cap.

"Will you join me? You've had a nasty shock, a man can see that. No? Ah well, I'll not bother with the niceties but take it straight from the bottle." He drank deeply, then scraped a chair

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across the floor and sat down in it, legs splayed wide, smiling sourly at Bowie.

He laughed aloud suddenly. "Man, but you're sweating. I can see it all racing through your mind. You're on the dirty end of the stick this time, Lawyer Bowie. I can feel for you, since I've held it myself times enough. What's to be done then? Will you break the news to brother Iain or shall I?"

He took another pull at the whisky and became suddenly jocular. "By God, Angus, talk about the prodigal's return; I'm going to enjoy every minute of it. It will be like a drawn tooth to you every time I spend a pound. And I'll spend them, be sure of that!"

"You were ay a good hand at the spending," Bowie observed dryly.

"I had few enough of them to spend in those days. But don't look so tragic, man. I shall need you around still."

"To pick up the pieces?" Bowie shook his head. "The day you settle in at Truckee, I'll kiss my hand to the Clan Obeig."

"You'll likely do what I tell you, Angus, for all of that. But we'll not argue the point here, there'll be talk enough when we go up to Truckee."

"Do they know you are here?"

"Devil a man in Scotland knows. I came through the clachan after dark, hugging my surprise to myself."

"But where have you been all this time? I spent a year trying to find you."

"You were always an honest man, that's why you're not a rich one. You'd not have found me in any case. Few English newspapers find their way into a Chilean gaol. Anyway I was not using my own name."

"You were in prison?"

"In and out a dozen times in as many places. Don't be surprised, you forecast it for me years ago—not that it needed the gift of prophecy."

"When did you hear of it, then?"

"Two days ago in the port of Leith; a fine newspaper story telling how a jumped-up politician was to open the new high dam at Truckee. The rest I read up in the newspaper files in Edinburgh and now I'm as wise as yourself. Mind, I've no hard feelings, Angus. You did try to find me and that's more than I would have done in your place."

The lawyer's face was bloodless, his lips thin and compressed. He said bitterly, "You have the luck of the devil."

Obeig laughed again. "I have the Luck of Truckee, at all events." He put a hand inside his shirt and fished out an

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object hanging from a thin gold chain. "You see, I carry it yet."

"It brought you little fortune in the past."

"Ah well, it's a long-term charm maybe. Anyway it brought in rewards at the finish." He broke the chain with a sudden jerk and tossed the charm on the desk top. "Take a look at it, Angus. A poor thing but mine own. About all my father ever left me, incidentally."

Angus picked up the large blue stone in its setting of pinchbeck mountain gold. It had no value as a jewel or a work of art but all the elder sons of Obeig had cherished it, passing it down through the family from an origin lost in the antique past. Legend had it that Wallace gave it to an Obeig follower, but no good had ever come of it that Bowie could remember. He let it drop with a tiny clatter on the desk top.

Donald Obeig took another pull at the bottle and slumped deeper in his chair.

"What will you do now?" Bowie asked him quietly.

Obeig blinked at him surlily, his voice a little slurred. "Do? What do you expect me to do? Obviously I'll kick out that gutless brother of mine and sleep between sheets again up at Truckee. Iain can settle with his prospective Kinsella in-laws. They'll likely give him a farm to play with."

"You know about Morag, then?"

"Oh aye, I know about Morag. She'll know a man when she sees one."

Bowie said with deep disgust, "A man, do you say, Donald Obeig? You're not a man but a rotting, sodden hulk with the worms already gnawing at you inside."

Obeig chuckled, no whit offended. "Man, Angus, you've a gift for the proper words." He set the bottle down awkwardly beside him and his eyes flickered and closed.

For a moment Bowie thought the man slept, but then Obeig spoke again with his eyes still closed. "What plans has Iain made for the money?"

"Good ones. He'll restore the home farm, bring in a Red Poll herd, and raise beef. He'll run it as a cooperative to help the village."

Obeig grunted. "He can forget that one. It's throwing good money after bad."

"Not now. Times have changed in the Highlands."

"Anyway, he'll not get the chance. I'll see to that."

Bowie said quietly, "We could fight you."

Obeig's eyes opened again. "Not under Scots law, Angus Bowie, and well you know it. Mine is the elder portion and all

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the rest is in my gift. And I'm not the giving type. You know that, too."

"You're drunk, man."

"Aye, and speaking a sober man's mind."

"Are you spending the rest of the night here?"

"You'll not join me in a dram?"

"Not I."

"Well, I'll finish the bottle myself, then we'll away up to the house to claim my inheritance."

He picked up the bottle and tilted the neck against his teeth, drinking in great gulps that left him grey-faced and breathless. The empty bottle slipped from his hand and rattled across the floor, fetching up against Bowie's desk. Obeig slumped still farther in the chair, closed his eyes again, and began to snore.

The air was sour with the whisky and the smell of the man. Bowie opened the window with a clatter that did not disturb Obeig. The lawyer watched the sleeping man for a moment with narrowed eyes. He walked across the room and picked up the bottle.

Obeig's head rolled forward on his chest, a bald patch on the back of his head caught the light. Bowie clutched the bottle by its neck; his breath came fast and unsteadily. He took one step forward, then another; the hand that held the bottle seemed to be lifting of its own volition.

The full impact of Obeig's return hit him all at once and he foresaw with a cold and awful clarity what its end must be. The hand holding the bottle rose high above his head and force began to build in the wasted muscle of his right arm.

He stood like that for a moment while the force built then ebbed to nothing, leaving him spent and shaken. His arm dropped slackly to his side and the bottle slid uselessly from it.

Obeig opened his eyes and sat up straight in the chair. "I was testing you out, Angus," he remarked calmly. "You're not the killing kind; that's the difference, do you see? For I am!"

Bowie stared at him, shaken by a sudden nausea. Obeig nodded his head solemnly. "There's blood on these hands, Angus. I tell you nothing that isn't known. I was a lifer in Valparaiso gaol till I broke out. They are looking for me yet, I make no doubt. But there's no extradition, do you see, my lawyer friend, no extradition. And now we'll away up to Truckee."

He lunged forward from the chair, flung the door wide, and staggered out. Bowie struggled into coat and hat and followed him. Obeig snuffled the night air like an animal, swaying on his

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feet. He swept an arm towards the dam. "Is that where my money comes from? I've a fancy to survey the workings. Come away, man, you can be my guide."

Bowie plucked at his coatsleeve. "You're in no condition to go down there. It's dangerous."

Obeig wrenched himself free and set off at a stumbling run, giggling like a naughty child as he staggered and lurched against the stacks of timber and stone. Bowie ran after him, feeling the sweat dampening his neck and the backs of his knees.

Obeig reached the door of a hut near the main workings and began to hammer on it. "Watchman, watchman, on your feet, watchman, the laird is here!"

Bowie caught up with him and pulled him away from the door.

"There is no watchman," he gasped. "The working is automatic by night."

The night air was in Obeig's head along with the whisky fumes and he reeled away, roaring drunk. "There'll be a watchman in future," he boomed. "Write it down in your estate book, Angus. The Obeig has spoken."

"For God's sake be sensible, man," Bowie pleaded.

"Who wants to be sensible? It's my night to howl, Angus Bowie, you can howl with me or you can keep your distance. Away out of the road! I'm going to see the dam."

Bowie started after him, words tumbling from his lips. Then he halted, conscious at once of the futility of the thing. Nothing he could say or do would prevent this drunken child from wrecking his dream for Truckee and Iain.

A hardness entered his soul and he stood his ground, watching the great bat-like overcoated figure of Donald Obeig lunging across the floodlit tarmac. The moment lasted only a second, then he was again racing madly in pursuit, gabbling he knew not what.

Obeig disappeared from view among the timbers and girders. Bowie saw him next in the full glare of the floodlights on the narrow catwalk under the line of hoppers. The strength was out of the lawyer now, his knees sagged and he slumped forward over a girder, his chin tilting upwards until he could see the smooth lips of the hoppers revolving slowly against the night sky.

As they moved slowly from the vertical he began to scream and the scream went on until sound came no longer from his taut-stretched throat. But no scream would halt Obeig or arrest the ponderous sway of the steel cauldrons. The concrete brimmed to the edge of the tapered ellipses and the first drops

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slopped over into the gulf. Bowie saw Obeig glance upwards and begin to run back.

Then all was lost in the thunderous roar that had been a part of life four times a day since the dam began building. Not a child in Truckee would lift a head from the pillow for it.

The hoppers moved back to the vertical and the refilling operation began.

On the catwalk there was nothing.

Bowie tottered back to the land office, an old and frightened man. He looked at the telephone for a moment before picking it up to call the rescue team, then sat there holding it.

Nobody knew that Donald Obeig had returned to the land of his fathers. Certainly nobody would ever find him now. The tart voice of Janet McKenna, the switchboard operator down in Truckee, broke into his thoughts. He apologised absently, saying he had made a mistake.

Janet said with the familiarity of long acquaintance, "Is it you then, Mr. Bowie? You're working over late. I should away home to your bed."

"Aye," he answered. "Aye, I'll do just that." He put the telephone down, then picked up Donald Obeig's hat and stuffed it into the stove. He left the Luck of Truckee lying on the desk. It was still there in the morning when Iain and Morag called, and so was he.

Iain took one look at it, his face hardening. "Donald's back," he accused.

Bowie shook his head wearily. "He's no' back, Iain Oig, only the Luck. It came to me last night from a long way off. From Valparaiso maybe, off a poor body that escaped from prison and perished later for his sins."

Morag said slowly, "I'm sorry. About Donald, I mean. But it seems so strange. Shall we never know more than this? Surely there's more to the story, Mr. Bowie."

Bowie stood up, his face peaked and grey. Iain made a warning gesture to Morag to be silent. The old man came forward and put his hands on the shoulders of the boy and girl. He spoke quietly but with deep authority.

"You're the last of the Obeigs, Iain, and the best of them yet. If there's more to the story, you have a right to know. And so have you, Morag, because you'll mother Obeigs, God willing. But it's not a story for the telling. Answer me, Iain. Have you ever had cause to doubt me?"

The young man shook his head.

"Well then, believe me. Donald will not come back. Now

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I know that the questions are struggling to get out of you both but you'll hear no more from me. The word was ay a bond between Obeigs and Bowies, you know that, Iain. Will you leave it so?"

Iain Oig hesitated only a moment. Then he took Bowie's hand and shook it firmly. Morag leaned forward and kissed him. Then they both went away. The roar of the sports car was drowned by the crash of the hoppers as they decanted their morning burden.

Bowie took out his silver hunter. It was exactly ten o'clock. It had been five minutes to the hour when Obeig staggered down to the dam on the previous night and Bowie had known it. Yet knowing it, he could not have stopped him; or could he? He would never be sure. Perhaps only the killing kind are sure, and no man but Donald Obeig could have told him the answer to that.

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Butch the Burglar

"We're taking your sports car, so do you mind if I borrow your beret?"

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If the apes die out the British will lose the Rock! On the Prime Minister's own instruction in 1944 the depleted Gibraltar apes must be kept up to strength. The ape Amelia (with her teetotal owner Miss Boddy) is flown out to be the bride of Scruffy, wicked, ugly, endearing—almost the last of the apes on the Rock. Crisis seems averted—but the demon Scruffy scorns his bride.

Scruffy

By PAUL GALLICO

WHAT appeared to be the solution of Major Tim Bailey's problems was short-lived and the pin that punctured it was, of course, the intransigence of that notorious ape, Scruffy.

Never had the old adage that you can drive a horse to water but you cannot make him drink had a more thorough illustration. By dint of bribery, threatening, and cajoling, Major Tim Bailey, Officer in Charge of Apes, and his right-hand man, Sergeant Lovejoy had brought Scruffy to the point where he would tolerate Amelia in the same cage, but that was as far as he would go. When she tried to approach him or made advances, he either cuffed her, spat at her, or bit her.

"It's just damn bad luck," Tim Bailey explained to Major Clyde. "He doesn't like her looks."

"I didn't know they cared," said the Major. "I just thought that when—"

"They don't," Tim asserted. "But *he* does. That's the trouble. Old Scruff is such a bastard he's practically human. The more she chucks herself at him the less he seems to be inclined."

Nevertheless Tim and the Sergeant kept a twenty-four hour watch on the cage containing Scruffy and Amelia, divided into alternating eight-hour shifts, for they were the only ones on the Rock sufficiently familiar with the physiology and habits of primates to be able to be sure that a union had taken place.

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These vigils accomplished a dual purpose. They kept track of any possible goings-on between the unhappy couple and at the same time mounted a thoroughly reliable twenty-four hour guard upon the last two monkeys that stood between the British Empire and the downhill path. However, one reason for this close observation would come to an end within a week or so when that period of combustion which nature sets alight in all its two-footed and four-footed female victims burnt out and Amelia would no longer be a candidate for motherhood. Tim had no doubt but that as soon as this moment was to hand and the lady was no longer pregnable, Scruffy would want her for his very own.

With no one else to be trusted, Tim had put himself and Lovejoy on a consecutive eight-hour watch schedule, midnight to eight in the morning, eight to four, and four to midnight, which meant that one of them stayed up on alternate nights keeping an eye on Scruffy and Amelia from St. Michael's Hut, a small shack close by the cages.

This played hell with Timothy's home life since his wife Felicity, herself a WRNS officer, was doing a ten-hour shift, locked up in the Coding Office. Their paths seemed to cross only occasionally and less and less frequently, sometimes for a hastily snatched meal, sometimes as Timothy would be coming home to a bed still warm from Felicity's departure. It was on one of those occasions when turn and schedule enabled Tim and Felicity to spend half an evening together that the OIC Apes confessed to his wife that he, or rather they, faced defeat.

That evening they were together until midnight when it was Tim's trick to go up to the cages. He had been more than usually downcast, failing to respond to all of Felicity's attempts to lift his spirits. Her martinis instead of elevating acted as a depressant; she even tried a few shameless advances of which her husband, unlike him, did not even seem to be aware.

"Oh, Tim," Felicity groaned finally, "you mustn't take it so to heart. I'll buy you another Empire if this one goes."

"I feel so helpless," Tim complained. "Here I am, Officer in Charge of Apes for the first time in history when it means something. The Brigadier's depending on me; he said so. For two years I've been telling him I'm the only one who knows all about these blighters and now that it's up to me to prove it I can't get that blasted magot to climb over the bolster."

Felicity said, "Shhh—don't be vulgar, darling. Have you tried forbidding him to have anything to do with her? Maybe if you segregated them now so that he *couldn't* get to—"

"Not with old Scruff. He knows that one. The Sergeant and I tried that the other morning. Scruff hopped up and down and clapped his hands. He was delighted. He wins, he always wins."

"I don't suppose there is anything we could do for the unprepossessing Amelia," Felicity suggested.

"Short of a month's course at Elizabeth Arden's—no," said Tim. "And that wouldn't get her eyes uncrossed. We have

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Gibraltar Disclaimer

Old Gibraltar hands will, no doubt, amuse themselves trying to identify the characters in this book and associate them with persons they have known. This pastime I must hasten to inform them and all others so disposed will be a waste of energy since never during the war was I within a thousand miles of Gibraltar.

It was therefore quite impossible for me to base any of these characters upon any persons dwelling, serving, or in office there at the time. If there is any resemblance to any such person it is entirely accidental and unintentional, as all characters, situations, and events in this story are fictitious.

There is only one demonstrable fact in this otherwise total work of fiction and that is that on the 25th August, 1944, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, caused a signal to be sent expressing his anxiety over disquieting rumours concerning the welfare of the Barbary apes in Gibraltar and the wish that they should not be allowed to die out. And on the 8th September of the same year a second directive to the effect that every effort should be made to restore the establishment of the apes to the number of twenty-four, and that this should be maintained thereafter.

So much for the truth. All that follows is nothing but the wildest imagination.

P. W. Gallico

groomed her and brushed her; Scruffy doesn't like her looks, he doesn't like her smell; he's not having any."

As though smitten by a sudden idea, Felicity rose quietly and left the room. When she returned she held in her fingers a small bottle, at the bottom of which was a minute amount of yellowish liquid. Tim looked at her and the little bottle inquiringly.

"The supreme sacrifice," Felicity said. "It's all I've got left. There won't be any more until after the war. You can have it."

"What is it?" Tim asked, his state being such that he was unable to recognise the bottle.

"Chanel No. 5," said Felicity. "Try it on Amelia. Maybe it's just the touch that will get Scruffy."

For a moment Tim was inclined to be angry. His nerves were

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badly jangled from continued frustration and it was no time for joking. Then as suddenly as his anger had been about to flare, it vanished, for he was aware of two things: one, that Felicity was serious and in her child-woman way really believed it might be of help, and the other that there was something oddly touching in the offer and behind it something even more touching, some kind of a mystery that he could not fathom. "Felicity," he said, "it—I'm afraid it wouldn't work. I don't want to take it if it is your last."

Felicity was now regarding him with a most curious expression and her voice suddenly sounded like a small faraway and wistful echo. "It worked for us," she declared, and then pushed the little bottle across to him. "Take it, I don't need it any more."

The universe about Tim's eyes and ears began to do strange things, take on queer shapes, pulled out long and thin and then patted down flat and round; it made curious noises, sweet music and the rolling sound of thunder, the floor beneath his chair was swaying gently, and he had the feeling that his eyes were suddenly crossed at an angle even greater than those of Amelia. His tongue had gone up somewhere into the roof of his skull where he could no longer use it.

Felicity, who as always knew when he was in difficulties, elected to play out the comedy for him. She came swiftly round to his side of the table, assumed his attitude and cried, "You mean—?" then nipped round back to her side to answer the question, "Oh, my darling, how clever of you to have guessed. Yes, it is true, you are about to become a father."

All the things pent up inside Major Tim Bailey exploded in one agonised cry, "Oh, why couldn't it have been Amelia?"

For the first time Felicity was genuinely shocked and hurt, even though a part of her understood. "I suppose because you are not that kind of ape," she cried in outrage. "If that's all you think of—"

Tim was across the table, his arms about her as the enormity of what he had said penetrated through the chaos into which he had been plunged. "Darling, I didn't mean that, you know it. I want to be a mother—you to be a mother, I mean—are you? Will you? I'm proud! I'm excited! I'm the exultant male! Watch me, I'll stand drinks all round. I'll take space in the *Rock Gazette*."

Felicity was mollified. "You'll do no such thing," she said. "Save the treat until I produce it, and as for exulting in the *Gazette* or anywhere else, you'll keep your big mouth shut."

"But why, my darling, why? This is the sort of thing one wants to clarion."

Felicity took his face between her hands and kissed it. "Not if mum-to-be also happens to wear the insignia of Second Officer Bailey of the WRNS."

"Oh, Gord," said Major Bailey, unconsciously echoing Sergeant Lovejoy as the light dawned.

"That's my bright boy," said Felicity. "One whisper that Officer Bailey is that way and out she goes from the Navy; once

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out, off she goes from the Rock . . . End of paradise enow."

"But—but," stammered Tim, "what happens when—when—Well, you know."

Felicity smiled a grave and satisfied smile. "Oh, I've thought of that," she said. "I was known as the fat girl once. I can be again."

Sheer chance, coupled with the dogged persistence with which Treugang Ramirez had clung to Sergeant Lovejoy as a source of information about the apes, paid off in the most unexpected manner and gave the little homegrown Nazi saboteur his long-awaited opportunity to deal the death blow to the morale of the British garrison as well as the civilians marooned on the Rock.

For the secret that there were now but two apes left, that all efforts to import them in quantity from Africa had failed, and that the British were pinning their hopes on one obstreperous, cantankerous, and obstructionist monkey mating with a total stranger he had not laid eyes upon up to a fortnight before, had remained a secret indeed.

The two intelligence officers, Majors McPherson and Clyde, had done a highly creditable job in tightening up security where the apes were concerned and putting forth counter-propaganda. Since the construction of Tim's cages by the apes' village and the closing of the area by troops, no one could get close enough to verify how many apes there were.

Thus, the source of information upon which the German propaganda machine was relying from inside the Rock was dried up. Their broadcasts continued in the same vein, but lacked the venom, bounce, and conviction of the earlier ones. Counter-propaganda put out by Clyde, McPherson, and Co. had the ape pack flourishing again and breeding normally, and these fables were generally accepted on the Rock, but the situation was tenuous in the extreme.

Although the troops guarding the cages were a picked lot and sworn to secrecy, one of them might blab and reveal the true situation. Or some officious secretary might remind the Prime Minister of the signal sent to the Rock with regard to keeping the apes up to strength and suggest that perhaps the P.M. would wish him to see how these had been carried out. This would loose an official inquiry.

What they needed was a bona fide ape birth on the Rock with the publication of an equally bona fide photograph of mother and child. Bluff wouldn't do in this instance, Major Clyde recognised. It had to be the real thing. Major Clyde was certain that if he could produce this birth upon the Rock, a genuine one, genuinely substantiated, the Germans would cease to credit their own propaganda and would begin to believe *his*.

Thus while there was still gleam of hope that it might work before it was too late, it was wholly unforeseen misfortune that Sergeant Lovejoy should drop into the Admiral Nelson at a time

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when it was usually deserted, ten o'clock in the evening, to find Treugang Ramirez lurking there nursing a beer. It had been a continuing ten-day lurk for Ramirez, always waiting, always hoping, for Lovejoy had not visited his favourite pub, or any other pub for that matter, ever since he had arrived back at the Rock with the teetotal Miss Constance Boddy and Amelia, at the triumphant conclusion of his special mission to wartime England.

John Lovejoy, now promoted to Sergeant, had been considering his forthcoming nuptials with Miss Boddy with what might be described as mixed emotions. He was aware that something stronger than himself had willed that he should spend the rest of his days with this agreeable, pleasant, and sweet-tempered woman.

The Sergeant didn't argue with this. It was only that for a man who had spent twenty-five years of his life as a soldier and a bachelor, the price was a little steep. No more Monkey Juice, no more drinks of any kind; no more standing up against a mahogany bar with the comfortable feeling of a glass in the fingers, a glow in the stomach, and a fluency to the tongue.

Nor was there any backsliding or mischief inherent in the visit of Lovejoy. He had not come to sneak a drink, but to have a word with the proprietor as to the bachelor party and farewell to spirits he intended to stage two nights hence. For with a sense of tact and fitness newly acquired since his association with Miss Boddy he had no intention of being caught falling down drunk in the public bar, and so had come to engage a private room for himself and three of his regular cronies.

At the entrance of the Sergeant, Ramirez had to look twice to make sure that it was the same man, for Lovejoy wore not the usual rumpled and stained denims which was his ape uniform, but clean ones, the trousers creased to knife-sharp edge, his hair properly cut, and his cap set at the smart Rock angle. On his sleeve gleamed the three chevrons newly sewn there by a woman's hand. It was not the old Gunner Lovejoy who had entered, but a brand new Sergeant Lovejoy.

But once he had taken in the apparition, it didn't take Treugang long to twig. " Sergeant," he cried, " Sergeant Lovejoy. What a surprise! You have been promoted! Have I not always said you deserved it? Congratulations, oh a thousand congratulations! "

" Oh," grunted Sergeant Lovejoy, " it's you." Ramirez leaning up against the bar grasping a beer was a reminder of the bad old days, or the good old days, whichever way one chose to regard the matter.

The Sergeant now addressed the barman. " Boss in, Joe? "

The barman paused only long enough in his eternal polishing of the bar to reply, " Back in half an hour. Had to see a man."

Sergeant Lovejoy consulted his watch. It had just gone ten. Then ten-thirty or shortly after would see him in plenty of time to discharge an errand or two and drive up to Ferdinand's Battery to take over the midnight to eight watch over the non-goings-on between Scruffy and Amelia.

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" I'll wait," said Sergeant Lovejoy.

The barman nodded, " What will it be? " He wagged his head in the direction of the new stripes and added, " It's on the house. The boss would want it."

" No, no, no," cried Treugang Ramirez. " Let me, Sergeant, it's my treat! Your promotion! Let me buy."

It wasn't the fact that not one but two free libations were offered that led Lovejoy to succumb, but because it was too complicated to explain. In a pub whose upkeep he had helped to maintain for some ten years, a man with newly-sewn sergeant's stripes on his sleeve was most certainly entitled to one at the expense of the management, and Lovejoy would have had to confess that he was on the verge of taking the pledge which would have called for humiliating details. Lovejoy was not yet ready to have his impending nuptials broadcast about the Rock nor the fact that it was bound up with total abstention.

The barman cut in, " First drink for the Sergeant on the house, like I said. You can buy later. What'll it be, Sarge? "

Now it had been on Lovejoy's mind to ask for a Monkey Juice—Guinness and lime—and nurse it, secure in the knowledge that he would take no harm from it, but there was something, unfortunately, in this offer of a drink on the house which precluded this. The house would be offended if he called for anything but the best. " I'll have a double whisky," said the Sergeant.

" I'll have the same," called Treugang Ramirez, and when the barman looked at him, slipped a ten-shilling note on the bar. " To drink the Sergeant's health," he added. " Mine is the next."

With one more in the offing, Lovejoy saw no need to nurse the one the barman had set up for him. For full enjoyment he liked to knock it back, feel the shock of its arrival down below followed by the spreading glow. He knocked it back. Treugang Ramirez did likewise. The barman took a sip of water, raising his glass towards Lovejoy and saying, " Cheer-ho, Sarge."

" Now my turn," cried Ramirez. " Two more doubles."

" Two more doubles," echoed the barman and set them up.

Lovejoy saw no need to nurse that one either since the aforementioned etiquette and protocol now called for him to invest in a third round. He knocked back the second as did Ramirez.

Ordinarily two double whiskies would not have turned a single grey hair of Lovejoy's head, or brought so much as a bead of perspiration to his lip, and the Sergeant had no reason to fear its effects. Alas, familiar as he was with the physiology of the Barbary ape, he was less acquainted with that of Homo Sapiens. He had forgotten he had just come through weeks of total abstinence, and he had not the faintest notion of the metabolic changes brought about by emotional strains, or their unpredictability.

Sergeant Lovejoy thus got drunk quickly and thoroughly and perilously, and not far behind him followed Treugang Ramirez who was paying for it all. For he had had a momentary flash of cunning or intuition which told him that the Sergeant would not

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have received his sergeant's stripes for nothing. Ramirez meant to find out why and what it was for and had no idea what a sterling start had been achieved through the two doubles.

Now the Sergeant was on his third double, and was well away.

The immediate result of these drinks was to muddle Lovejoy's wits so that he became confused as to time, place, and the relationship of past, present, and future. It seemed to him that the final party he had come to arrange had already begun and that he was bidding his last farewell to all those flavours and jolts with which he had so long been familiar. And since there seemed to be no end to the generosity of his dear and good friend Treugang Ramirez, whom he now knew that he loved better than a brother, he began to mix his treats.

Farewell then to gin and its inseparable tonic, good-bye to Monkey Juice, adieu cognac, adios Bacardi, auf wiedersehen to wines red, white, and pink, and good-bye likewise to Sergeant Lovejoy.

For the boss, catastrophically, didn't return for over an hour, and by that time the damage was done. Into the interested and sympathetic ear of the barman and the thrilled and fascinated one of Treugang Ramirez, Lovejoy had spilt every last bean concerning himself, the non-existent ape pack, the fact that but two remained and that the salvation of the Hempire hung upon their immediate copulation.

To Treugang Ramirez, the inspired Nazi patriot, came the knowledge that he held in his hands now or never the opportunity to destroy the last two apes on the Rock, relay the news to the Germans, and thereby break the British.

At twenty-five minutes to twelve there came to Sergeant Lovejoy, now nine-tenths sozzled and practically paralysed from the waist down, one of those awful moments of clarity which have been known to visit a drunken man shortly before a complete pass-out.

It began with an unexpected and short-lived unclouding of his vision which enabled Lovejoy to make out the time on the face of the bar-room clock and for it to penetrate that he was just twenty-five minutes away from having to steer his car up the mountainside, utter the password, let himself into the caged area with his keys, and begin the midnight to eight watch over Scruffy and Amelia.

Twelve o'clock midnight would soon be booming from all of the Gibraltar tower clocks; Major Tim Bailey would be sitting himself in his vehicle and departing the area; Sergeant Lovejoy would not be arriving. Neither his hands nor his legs were any longer his own.

"Oh, Gord," groaned Sergeant Lovejoy. "Got to go! Apes! Midnight! My trick!" And then he repeated, "Oh, Gord," and added, "Legs no good." Nor indeed were they, for when he tried to rise from the table, they buckled under him.

Treugang Ramirez was drunk too, but not all *that* drunk, for he had managed surreptitiously to pour some drinks out and leave

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others half consumed in his determination to probe Lovejoy's secrets. He was far tighter than he had ever been in his life before, but still able vaguely to cerebrate and function.

"What is it?" he said to the Sergeant. "What is the matter?"

The instant of clarity still lingered long enough for Lovejoy to know that he was trapped, and by his own weakness. He could never make the car much less the Rock under his own steam.

And here Ramirez showed that he could improvise. "I'll drive you," he said, "I'll take you."

Lovejoy was now fighting against final mists which were closing in upon him and through which he saw Treugang Ramirez, not as a nasty-looking little man wearing artificial hairpiece and thick-lensed spectacles, but as his saviour angel descended from heaven. "Will you?" he muttered. "You're a pal, Ramirez. I always said you were O.K. Password for tonight: silly mid-on. Get it! Cricket! Keys in m'right-hand pocket. Door sticks when you unlock it. Got to lift it a bit. That's all."

Between them the barman and Ramirez managed to get Lovejoy out of the pub and into the car. It was fourteen minutes to twelve. The barman helped Ramirez into the driver's seat and asked, "Can you make it all right?" Ramirez nodded. "Look after him," the barman said, "he's a good bloke, Lovejoy. None better."

"I'll look after him," Ramirez promised. Fighting off the fumes of alcohol in his own head he got the engine going and started off. Two-thirds of the way there he was met by headlights going down the hill, and knew from what Lovejoy had spilt in the bar that this must be Major Bailey descending. He didn't dim his own headlights and in the glare Major Bailey saw only that it was Lovejoy's vehicle and not who was at the wheel.

As they approached the zone in which the apes were kept and Ramirez saw a flashlight signalling in the middle of the road, he slowed down sufficiently to pull Lovejoy erect beside him. When he arrived at the military road block and the light momentarily was shone upon them, he managed to repeat the password, silly mid-on, and was waved through. He had already possessed himself of the keys in Lovejoy's pocket, as directed, and let himself into the area of the cages and cages within cages.

Inside he found everything as Lovejoy had described it. In one corner of the inner cage sat a full-grown female monkey, a most ugly and ill-favoured specimen whose eyes didn't seem to match, who huddled in the corner moaning and making chittering noises.

In the other corner, wide awake, his honey-coloured eyes glistening with malevolence, sat Scruffy, the ape who had stolen his wig, and the last surviving member of the Gibraltar pack.

Every so often the ill-favoured female would creep forward timidly and present herself to the male, wrong end first. When she did this he would throw dirt at her until she went away. Oh, everything was indeed as Sergeant Lovejoy had revealed.

For the moment the vista opening before his eyes of success

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unparalleled conquered the quantities of alcohol he had consumed and made Ramirez temporarily sober and able both to think and to act. Here at hand was the opportunity not only to find himself one day standing before the Fuehrer to receive the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, but likewise to have his revenge upon the British swine who had always scorned and derided him even while accepting his drinks, and who had been actively concerned in the humiliating episode of the stolen hairpiece. The plan was already whirling about in his head. Somewhere, somehow, he would come upon the weapon wherewith to exterminate the last two remaining apes and not only that but in the morning Sergeant Lovejoy—Sergeant indeed—would be found in a drunken slumber upon the scene and blamed for it.

It was all so neat and tidy that Ramirez could barely refrain from hugging himself.

The first thing to be done was to get Sergeant Lovejoy out of the car and on to the premises. The second was to secure a weapon.

The former called for a serious effort, during the execution of which Ramirez discovered that he was not as sober as he thought he was, but still he managed to drag the now wholly unconscious Lovejoy out from the vehicle and deposit him on a bench conveniently there. Ramirez next set about the problem of the weapon. He knew that if he could lay his hands on a firearm, frightened as he was of them, he would not let this opportunity escape him. He recalled a small shack at the entrance of the cages, identified by Lovejoy as the headquarters of himself and Major Bailey, and it struck him that surely he would find some kind of armament there to be used in case of emergency.

He hurried out and entered the small hut. His first glance showed him there was no rifle there, not even so much as a pistol in a holster hanging up. There was a cot, a table, a primus stove, a tea kettle, a tin of tea and some unwashed cups, a tobacco tin and a few odds and ends.

He was about to write this off in disgust when a coloured box upon the shelf caught his eye, a box with a curious legend on the side which spelt out the word PARTYLOONS. He inspected the box further and on the cover saw a picture of a boy blowing up a huge rubber balloon and again the inscription PARTYLOONS, with the addition, *Finest Rubber Party Balloons—blow up to enormous size.*

With trembling fingers he lifted the cover of the box and saw an assortment of more than two dozen coloured balloons. Something he had once heard the Sergeant say flashed back into his memory and he now knew that in his shaking hands he held the means to destroy the last two apes on the Rock of Gibraltar.

There remained now only to send up what might be most aptly termed a trial balloon for the purpose of verifying its effect. Treugang selected a red one, approached that part of the cage where Scruffy crouched watching him, placed the open end to his lips, and commenced to blow. The effects exceeded his wildest expectations, leaving no doubt in his mind but that it would work.

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At the very first swelling of the article from the size of a lemon to that of an orange to that of a grapefruit, a change came over the big monkey. His lips were drawn back from his fangs, his eyes grew large and filled with terror though he continued to stare transfixed and hypnotised, his limbs began to tremble and he took on every aspect of a person on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

As the balloon increased in size with every puff that Ramirez could muster, Scruffy began to moan and shake all over. He covered his eyes with his paws as though unable to look any more, and then removed his hands as though no longer able *not* to look. He beat the ground with his feet and his knuckles, tore at tufts of hair on his breast and head, whimpered and cried pitifully, and in general began to come apart.

Until science has conquered the speech of apes and made communication possible, no one will ever know exactly what it was about the balloon swelling to bursting point which reduced the world's toughest and most malignant ape to a trembling heap of frightened fur. It hypnotised and fascinated him the way a snake captivates a bird. Suspense unquestionably had something to do with it, the awful period of waiting for it to pop.

Larger and larger grew the red balloon, now completely concealing the face and the inflating force behind it, to the point where it attracted Amelia from the far side of the cage. What she saw intrigued her enormously, but didn't frighten her. Whatever the swelling balloon meant to Scruffy, it didn't mean the same to Amelia.

What drew her fascinated attention was her boyfriend's dither and disintegration. The erstwhile bully and tyrant had been reduced to a trembling coward. This didn't in any way diminish her love and admiration for him. It merely put a different aspect on the case. It was no longer dangerous or chancy to approach him. For the first time nothing was being thrown at her.

She sat a little distance away regarding Scruffy's convulsions with grave and thoughtful contemplation in her eyes. But none of this did Treugang Ramirez see, since he was now completely concealed behind a swelling sphere, and himself growing pretty nervous as to what would happen when at last it blew up.

He didn't have long to wait. Two more deep breaths and puffs exceeded even the most optimistic stresses the Partyloon Company had built into their product. There was a sudden sharp and ringing pop, frightening even to one who had been expecting it. A shred of torn red rubber hung from the lips of Ramirez; and, his view now unimpeded, he saw Scruffy in what appeared to be mortal anguish, undone, unstrung, nerve-shattered, and crying for mercy. There was no doubt but that one or two more such experiences would, with their accumulative effect, turn the trick.

But now Ramirez was likewise aware of a curious and unexpected by-product of his effort. As every action had a reaction, every gun its recoil, so Ramirez found that the rapid and consecutive gusts of boozy wind he had been exhaling into the balloon

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combined with the unaccustomed poison of too much alcohol in his system, had left him feeling weak, a little sick, and very dizzy in the head.

If the first effort had dizzied him, the second one had him reeling and gasping and feeling most faint, yet in his difficulty a picture marched through his mind to buoy him up and lend him strength, that of a little man, wearing a small moustache and an outsize military cap, pinning an Iron Cross on his chest.

Ramirez reached for a blue balloon and strained. Curtains of blood seemed to be descending over his closed eyes; his heart was pounding, his lungs heaving and there was such a roaring in his ears that he hardly heard the bang when it went off. Blindly he groped for yet another, not even aware of the colour—it turned out to be a white one—and bravely tried to fill it with what he was now convinced were his last breaths and which he therefore dedicated to that side of his family and their Fatherland which had so long obsessed him.

He blew, but more weakly. Each puff became a hell. The red before his eyes turned to maroon, then purple; the roaring in his ears a cataract of sound to be followed at last and mercifully by silence and darkness, sweet silence, sweet darkness, sweet peace that enshrouded him, as quietly he toppled over dead out but still breathing, to join the unconscious figure of Sergeant John C. Lovejoy.

When he had collapsed the night before, Ramirez's flailing arms had somehow managed to dislodge his hairpiece and push it over his face, giving him the aspect somewhat of a man trying to hide underneath a mat. Open at his side was a box of coloured balloons and strewn about him was the wreckage of four torn bits of red, white, blue, and yellow rubber.

On the bench opposite him was the living corpse of Sergeant John C. Lovejoy, likewise dead to the world.

There was a familiar scent or fragrance that hung about the place and which the educated nostrils of Major Bailey had no difficulty in identifying as that of second-hand alcohol.

There was something familiar about the man under the hairpiece. He had seen him before, but could not think where. But if Lovejoy was in a stupor, dead out as he appeared to be, goodness knows what had happened to the apes; hardly daring to do so Major Bailey turned to the inner cage and looked and, strong man that he was, he thought he might faint if he didn't grasp hold of the mesh of the cages to support himself. He stared. He closed his eyes and rubbed them hard, and stared again, and the spectacle remained unaltered. For Scruffy and Amelia were locked in an embrace for which the word close was wholly inadequate.

For a few moments Major Timothy Bailey felt that he must be bereft of his senses, but the marvellous, incredible, miraculous, and wonderful vision remained before his eyes.

So tightly were the two intertwined that it was impossible to

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tell who was in whose arms, how many hands and feet there were, where which began and who left off. One didn't need to be a physiologist, a veterinary surgeon or even an OIC Apes, who for two years had lived in close association with the Macaque and had made a study of their ways and habits, to know that bells should be pealed, cannon fired, patriotic songs chanted, and a holiday be declared with dancing in the street in national costume. For the King of the Apes had consented to receive and bless his Queen. And if the lord were good and the watchdogs of science, medicine, and midwifery were on their toes, she would in due time be delivered of an heir, and the land and the nation would rejoice and flourish.

But what this incomprehensible miracle had to do with the shambles behind him, from which arose alcoholic fumes and the unlovely snores of the two unconscious men, Tim could not fathom. And at that moment Sergeant John C. Lovejoy opened first one eye then the other, sat up, and gradually what he saw with each eye blended and focused into one scene, and if there was confusion and wonder in the soul of Major Bailey, it was as a clear and lucid light compared to what went on inside the Sergeant as he looked upon his Major, the still unconscious Treugang Ramirez, the burst balloons, and the oblivious and wholly enamoured couple a few yards away in the cage.

And yet at that very moment when the Sergeant should have been overwhelmed by the grandfather of all hangovers and unable to give the right answer if asked the sum of two and two, his mind was working at a furious and incredibly accelerated speed. What had taken over in Lovejoy, who if nothing else in the first flash had recognised the enormity of the crisis and the depth of the mess he was in, was the instinct of self-preservation. And just as though he had never touched a drop, all the guile, cunning, and accumulated experience of twenty-five years of dealing with the officer class were alert and ready to come to his rescue.

If only he could solve the mystery of the man lying on the floor who appeared to have the hide of some small fur-bearing animal instead of a face, balloons burst and whole scattered all over the place, the two magots apparently trying to emulate Romeo and Juliet, and Major Bailey looking ecstatically happy and alternately furiously angry. Of the events of the night before, the Sergeant had not so much as a glimmer. All was a blank, but already his razor-sharp wits told him that the Major was both annoyed with him and highly pleased with the development in the cage. It was plain that what was good must be exploited to ameliorate what was bad. But how?

At that moment the mystery object on the floor returned to the world with a deep groan of pain as simultaneously consciousness and the full force of *his* hangover hit him. He sat up, pushed the hairpiece back into position on to the shining egg of his skull and suddenly became once more Treugang Ramirez, but a Ramirez who was looking not at all well. The eyes behind the thick

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spectacle lenses were bloodshot, the small polyp mouth framed a sickish expression, and what *he* saw further reduced him into a state of absolute quaking terror.

For he, the great patriot spy and saboteur who ought to have been safely in his home or on his way to his workbench in the Optical Department of the Navy Yard, laughing up his sleeve at the stupidity of the British, was now caught redhanded upon the scene of his crime, surrounded by the evidence of the weapons he had used to commit it, nabbed not only by Lovejoy but that fool of a British officer who concerned himself with the apes and who would now unquestionably and summarily hand him over to be shot.

And one further guilty glance in the direction of the cage where he expected to see two corpses littering the floor told him that when he was stood up against a wall and riddled with bullets for the Fatherland there would not even be any point in murmuring "Heil Hitler," for he would be expiring ingloriously and in vain. The apes were quite the opposite of dead.

"Lovejoy," Tim demanded. "What the devil is the meaning of all this?"

"Meaning of what, sir?" replied Lovejoy, elbowing for one smidgen, one fraction, one split iota of time. Never had he needed or wanted time so badly. For his spinning wits had already revealed one aspect of the case against him—he had been asleep at his post when Major Bailey had arrived, not an inconsiderable crime in wartime, and, the object on the floor having evolved itself into Treugang Ramirez, he had likewise obviously admitted an unauthorised person into the most top secret and closely guarded area on the Rock. And to know what one is about to be charged with, if not half the battle, at least permits one to organise one's defences.

"Don't waffle, Sergeant," Tim said sternly. "You know crashing well what I mean. Drunk and asleep on duty. What's been going on here?"

Rule Number One, Lovejoy's quarter of a century in the Army had taught him, was when charged to sow doubt immediately. "Oh, not drunk, sir," he said sorrowfully. "Not drunk."

The shock of this barefaced denial threw Tim momentarily out of stride, and now that wonder-worker, that other Lovejoy, the trained psychologist, applied the gambit diversion and the well-tried move of changing the subject to something pleasant. "Coo," he said indicating the two apes with his glance and ignoring the Major's other questions and accusations as well as the presence of Ramirez. "Look at 'em there like a pair of lovers canoodling in 'Yde Park, sir. 'Oo would have believe it possible?"

With a rush, joy, excitement, and sense of fulfilment swept through Major Bailey, temporarily displacing the choler which had collected there. "By gad, Lovejoy," he cried. "We've done it, haven't we?"

"Yes, sir," said Lovejoy, swiftly following up his advantage,

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" by the looks of them you have, sir, and congratulations. Wait till Major Clyde hears about this. He won't half be pleased."

" That's right," said Tim. " Get on the blower from St. Michael's Hut and tell him to come up here as fast as he can, and bring McPherson. But don't give away what's happened."

" Yes, sir, I will! No, sir, I won't," replied Lovejoy, delighted to be allowed to retire from the scene for a moment.

At the cages, Tim continued to ignore the groaning man still seated on the floor; it would be up to Lovejoy to explain that one, and once more he turned his attention to the Sergeant who had returned to report.

" Did you get him? " Tim asked.

" Yes, sir. He and Major McPherson will be right along."

" Did he want to know what it was about? "

" He was very worried, sir. Wanted to know if the worst 'ad 'appened. I said he was to cheer up, that life wasn't all that bad, and he'd see when he got here."

Major Bailey nodded approval and then said, " So you weren't drunk last night? "

" No, sir," said Lovejoy. " Ill. Very ill, I'm afraid, sir."

Tim said, " Humph. What's that stink of booze about the place? "

" My medicine, sir, I expect," Lovejoy replied. " It's got some funny stuff in it. I can taste it for days afterwards."

Tim said, " Humph," again and then indicated with his head in the direction of Ramirez. " And that? "

" My pal, sir. He brought me here. I didn't want to disturb you, sir, I thought if I got here I'd be all right. I didn't think I was going to pass out, sir."

" And him? " Tim questioned. " Was he sick too? "

" I couldn't say, sir," Lovejoy replied, and then added for truth perforce, " he doesn't look very well, does he? " He tried the subject change again. " The main thing is, sir, you've pulled it off. You've got the pair together. There ought to be a gong in it for you! "

" Come off it, I wasn't here last night," Tim said curtly, and turned once more to study the situation in the light of Lovejoy's explanation so far. He was wondering whether it would stand up.

And Lovejoy's alert, lively, and brilliantly functioning mind was speculating. In their years of association working for the apes, an understanding, if not a kind of affection, had grown up between officer and man. The fact that Tim had not chewed him out for the palpable lie about not being drunk, but ill, told the Sergeant that if he could only cook up a story which would slide down the Major's gullet without choking him, he would be home. But what story?

Major Bailey looked once more with undiminished amazement at the twin huddle of monkeys and then at Ramirez.

" Who is this bloke? " he asked of Lovejoy.

Lovejoy's reply was one of those pure, heaven-sent inspirational

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flashes. The occasion called for a whopping, but digestible lie. Lovejoy thought he had it.

"He's an expert, sir. An expert on apes."

"He's a what?" said Tim.

Sick, terrified, bewildered, and baffled as he was, what Lovejoy had just said penetrated to the ears of Ramirez and stirred the first faint whisper of hope within his breast. For some reason he was unable to fathom, the Sergeant was not going to give him away immediately. Perhaps secretly, even, the Sergeant was one of them. How fortunate that he had not yet revealed himself. But he must not rejoice too soon; perhaps this was only a trap into which he was being led to gain a full and easy confession.

"Alfonso Ramirez, sir," replied Lovejoy, rendering a formal introduction. "Works for Captain Russell in the Navy Yard, sir, Optical Department. Double A security. But he's an expert, sir. Used to 'ave apes when he was a boy. It was his idea, sir."

"What was his idea?"

"To scare 'em into it, sir. It's the only thing we didn't try."

Major Bailey looked from Lovejoy to Ramirez to the loving apes and back to Lovejoy again.

Lovejoy watched him warily, for if Major Bailey had not twigged at least one sequence of events that had taken place that night, he himself had. "Had a case like it, Mr. Ramirez did. Told me about it last night. Owned a pair of lemurs once that wouldn't breed. Scared them into each other's arms and away they went merry as crickets."

"Is this so, Mr. Ramirez?" Major Bailey inquired.

Gott! thought Alfonso T. Ramirez, apostrophising the German rather than the English deity in his gratitude. The stupidity of these British. Not only was he not going to be placed against a wall and shot, but he was not even going to be found out or punished, or so much as accused of anything. It was incredible, but seemingly true.

"Oh yes," he said. "Every word. It is true as my friend Lovejoy here has told."

"'If everything else fails, you scare 'em,' Mr. Ramirez says to me." Lovejoy picked up the narrative. "'But how can you frighten such a beast as Scruffy?' he asks. You may remember, sir, that Mr. Ramirez had an unfortunate experience with the animal."

"Oh yes," said Tim, and involuntarily his glance strayed to the hairpiece now only slightly askew on the senor's head, and he immediately felt embarrassed and sorry for Ramirez.

"'Why,'" continued Sergeant Lovejoy, "'balloons,' I said to him. 'Old Scruff can't abide balloons. Maybe if we blew up a couple of balloons for him it would work.'"

"Was that about the way it was, Mr. Ramirez?"

"Oh yes, sir! Every word of it."

"And where did this conversation take place?" inquired Tim.

"Oh, outside the Admiral Nelson," Lovejoy replied ingenuously.

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He was also a great devotee of the half-truth. "We happened to encounter there."

"This was before you were taken ill, I gather," Tim said solicitously.

"Ah yes, sir. My attack hadn't come on me yet."

"I see. Then you both came on up here—"

Sergeant Lovejoy drew a deep breath, the first since his awakening. Could it be that it really had gone down the Major's gullet smoothly and properly and that he was actually asking for more? "That's it, sir," he said. "And there they was like you've always seen 'em. Her loving and eager; him cruel and cold. 'Now then,' says Mr. Ramirez, 'shall we try? You blow one.' 'No,' says I, 'it's your idea and your honour. You blow, I'll observe.' So 'e blows one. 'E blows a second. 'E blows another. You know the effect them balloons has always had on Scruff. Well, this time it's exactly the same. Terror stricken 'e is, shaking and unnerved, sir. Only this time there's a difference."

Sergeant Lovejoy paused dramatically, to prepare for the revelation of that difference. "This time there awaited him the arms of a comforting and loving woman. Haven't you had that experience yourself, sir? When everything seemed to be going against you and you didn't know which way to turn? It's the woman that's the saving grace of us, sir. First, it's our mothers, later on it's our—well, there's always one that seems to come along when you need her most, isn't there, sir?"

Major Bailey didn't reply. Lovejoy hoped it was because he was too deeply moved for words.

"Well, that's how it was with old Scruff, sir. There 'e was, one moment shivering and shaking, whimpering, and crying; there she was, sir, eager to 'elp him, sympathetic, warm-hearted. 'Olding out her arms. And the next moment there *they* were!"

You bastard, thought Tim. *You clever, lying, scrimshanking, convincing bastard!* But the point was that the story would stand up. It would stand up beautifully if one didn't pry into or refer back to the condition the two men had been in when he arrived, and the obvious but rapidly diminishing fragrance of booze. Facts were facts, and there was no getting round the fact that there were the burst balloons and there were Scruffy and Amelia no longer two but one.

There was a snort and a clatter as a car drew up outside the enclosure and disgorged the Majors McPherson and Clyde.

In the manner of a master showman, Tim stepped aside to clear their view, pointed dramatically, and said, "Behold! The miracle."

They stared unbelieving at first, then gave vent to relieving expletives.

"Tim, you are a wizard," congratulated Major Clyde.

Major Bailey, still dramatically pointing, now semaphored in the direction of Senor Ramirez. "We owe it all to this gentleman here," he declared.

The Majors McPherson and Clyde looked in the direction

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indicated and were momentarily stunned into silence. The person pointed to didn't look exactly what might be expected of the saviour of the key bastion of the British Empire. The physical malaise brought about by the debauch of the night before had abated not one whit; abject terror had but recently been replaced by slowly returned confidence; his rug still wasn't on straight and his clothes were a mess.

"He knows more about apes than any of us," Major Bailey elucidated. "Had 'em when he was a boy. Lovejoy will tell you about it."

"Yes, sir," agreed Lovejoy. "But it was Mr. Ramirez's idea." He was thrilled about being off the hook and he wanted no part of the credit, and besides, Ramirez had come through like a brick the night before.

The pals took another look at the trembling, sweating Ramirez and were not impressed, and then turned their gaze to Major Bailey. But there was no hint of guile in Tim's face.

"Look here, Tim, are you sure?" Clyde queried.

Tim passed the buck. "What about it, Lovejoy?"

"I'd lay me 'ead to a stack of Bibles on it," Lovejoy said fervently. "If I may point out, sir, it's the right time, the right place—"

"—the right girl," Major Clyde concluded for him.

They all turned now and gazed fondly upon the temporarily subdued Scruffy enfolded in the arms of his mistress, or vice versa. It was, of course, silly and utterly ridiculous—to reason that the eventual stability of Gibraltar and the subsequent defence of the Mediterranean stemmed from this momentary coupling of a pair of illmatched and illfavoured Macaques. But certainly the delighted group observing them outside their cage believed this to be the case.

They had worked so long and hard upon the project, had taken so to heart the message of the Prime Minister that the apes, for reason of morale, must be kept up to strength, and it seemed as though the burden of the entire war effort had been shifted to their shoulders. Now that for the first time it looked as though that burden was to be lifted, and the success of Major Clyde's long-range planning just round the corner, they were filled with relief and joy.

Major Clyde was trying to paraphrase or catch a quotation, something like, When the doors of history are thrown open the right man is always found standing upon the threshold. He then had a vision of great bronze doors swinging open and the shocking little man, with his wig all askew, his clothes wrinkled, and eyes blinking behind the thick-lensed spectacles, standing there. But he also remembered another saying from his youth, that the lord often worked in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

His thoughts then turned wholly practical and, looking towards the future, he asked, "Oughtn't we to have a gyno?"

"My God, yes," chimed in Major McPherson. "The best!"

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"Holy smoke!" cried Major Timothy Bailey. "Me, too!"
They all turned and stared at him.

"Am I to understand, sir, that I have been dragged away from my practice in London—my life risked in a flying machine that appeared to be appallingly unsteady—and set down on this exposed promontory to attend the pregnancy and delivery of a monkey? And you claim at the behest of the Prime Minister?"

The questions put by Sir Archibald Cruft, the eminent gynaecologist, closeted in Major McPherson's office with Timothy Bailey and William Clyde, were asked not so much in anger as complete and utter disbelief that such a thing could be possible.

It was a moment that Clyde rather had been dreading. He could think of nothing else to say than, "Yes, sir."

"When you visited me in my office, you led me to believe that I was to attend a human patient of national importance in whom the Prime Minister—"

Clyde felt better now. "I never said human patient, sir; I said to attend a delivery of the greatest importance to the country. The instructions of the P.M. were that no effort was to be spared. If you will remember, I offered to get him on the line to have a word with you." The recollection threw Sir Archibald into some confusion and unsteadied him in his intention to proceed from disbelief to towering rage.

Briefly, succinctly, in a well-ordered sequence that would appeal to a scientific mind, Clyde outlined to the great man the facts in the case and all that hung upon the delivery to Amelia of a healthy, active offspring, able to face photographers at an early age and interrupt by its presence the morale-shattering pattern of the decline of the Rock apes.

Sir Archibald, as one who had not been contradicted in the last twenty years and was inclined to be a trifle pompous and well aware of his position in medical society and quite pleased with it, was at the same time no fool, and Clyde's lucid presentation of the situation and the consequences that might possibly attend failure, were obvious to him.

Sir Archibald felt all his anger drain away from him, but not his doubts, fears, and anxieties. "But why me, man?" he queried, when Clyde had finished his recital. "Why not a veterinary? There must be half a dozen good men available."

For a moment Clyde again experienced a pang of uneasiness. Why not indeed? And he realised that he had been perhaps carried away by his own enthusiasm. In his mind birth had been connected with a gynaecologist, and the habit he had formed ever since he had had the directive from the Prime Minister had been to accept nothing but the best in every phase of this operation. "Not good enough, sir," he replied. "This situation calls for the best brain, the years of experience, and the steadiest hand in the field."

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Sir Archibald swallowed the compliment, enjoying its savour, but then said, "That's very kind of you, Major, but you overlooked one important factor: I have never delivered a monkey."

"Eh?" ejaculated the Major, startled by the gynaecologist's words. "Does that make any difference, sir? I thought monkeys were like—"

"People?" Sir Archibald concluded for him. "Not at all. For one thing, monkeys don't call upon the services of gynaecologists to assist them at birth." He paused as a new thought struck him. "What will happen when it gets out back in London that Archie Cruft was called in to midwife a monkey? And it will get out. I'll never be able to face them. Look here, Clyde, I won't—"

"Sir," Tim Bailey put in, "might I—?"

Sir Archibald turned his massive craggy face towards Tim, and stared at him as though he had never seen him before—which indeed he had not, since Tim had remained in the background, taking no part in the conversation.

"It needn't get out," said Tim. "My wife—you see, we're expecting, sir—if you could possibly see your way clear to—to accept her as a patient—why then *that* would be the story which would get back to London. We could see to that, sir."

It was a straw. Sir Archibald examined Tim more closely now. "Who are you?" he asked.

Clyde reminded him. "Major Timothy Bailey, sir, OIC—that is, Officer in Charge of Apes. It has been his responsibility—"

"Is your wife here?" Sir Archibald asked of Bailey.

"Yes, sir."

"What's her name?"

"Felicity, sir."

Clyde put in quickly, "Admiral French's daughter, sir."

The stern countenance of Sir Archibald Cruft suddenly brightened. "What," he said, "not old Tubby French's daughter! I used to beat him at golf."

"Will you take her, sir?" Tim asked eagerly.

"Yes, yes, of course," Sir Archibald replied somewhat testily, as though it had all been settled. "Tubby French's daughter, naturally."

"And Amelia?" Clyde queried.

Sir Archibald reflected for a moment while they all waited anxiously. "Well," he said, and left no doubt as to the manner in which the affair was to be handled, "as long as I'm down here looking after Tubby French's daughter, I might as well. Suppose I have a look at the patient."

Three sighs of relief exploded simultaneously, and Major McPherson cried, "Splendid, sir! That's very good of you. I'll have Sergeant Lovejoy take you to the upper Rock and show you Amelia."

"Well, let's get on with it then," said Sir Archibald . . .

The Military Hospital of Gibraltar was a huge, sprawling affair of grey blocks with odd Victorian trimming in black, Moorish

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arches, and crenellated towers. The operating- and labour-rooms, however, were modern enough with incubators, X-ray, and all the latest scientific gadgets, and Sir Archibald pronounced himself satisfied with the equipment and the nursing staff as well. There was also a waiting-room decorated in soothing tones which had once been set aside for expectant fathers, and it was here that the three Majors—Bailey, Clyde, and McPherson—Sergeant Lovejoy and his bride, the former Miss Boddy—and Felicity foregathered anxiously on the day that medical science, coupled with mathematics, had determined that Amelia would produce.

There was far too much at stake to risk chancing a natural birth for Amelia in one of the cages up in the apes' village and, besides, Sir Archibald felt comfortable only when aseptically scrubbed, capped, and gowned in a proper operating-theatre. Birth was a serious drama to him. It was he who was the chief actor occupying the centre of the stage, and he liked an audience.

Tim had been violently opposed to Felicity's presence upon this occasion. The arithmetic in her case had decreed that she was not due for another two weeks, and Tim did not wish her exposed prematurely to those grisly exhibits that are always being pushed or carried up and down hospital corridors. Felicity had overruled him.

Sir Archibald appeared at the door of the main operating-theatre for a moment, gowned but not yet capped and scrubbed.

Tim, who had been chainsmoking nervously, was on his feet instantly. "Is everything all right, Doctor?" he cried.

"Do you anticipate any trouble?" asked Major Clyde.

"Oh, Doctor, you will take good care of our Amelia, won't you?" pleaded Mrs. Lovejoy.

Sir Archibald had assumed his professional manner and soothing smile with his surgeon's gown. "We haven't even begun yet. In a Prime Ibs., as you know, the presentation is always a bit chancy. Still, I don't anticipate any difficulty. The monkey appears to be normal. Well, gentlemen, we shall know shortly." He turned on his heel and strode through the door leading to the operating-theatre, like an actor exiting on a good line.

The time was nine o'clock in the evening. There was a bustle and stir as down the corridor, flanked by two gowned and masked nurses, an attendant wheeled a stretcher table. On the table was a box. Inside the box sat Amelia. She was whimpering softly. Mrs. Lovejoy half started up from her chair, and her husband laid a restraining arm upon hers and said, "Don't worry, there's nothing to it."

Major Clyde quoted, "Our birth is nothing but our death begun."

"For God's sake, shut up," Tim hissed at him in a furious whisper, indicating Felicity.

Major Clyde clapped a hand over his mouth and said, "Sorry, old man! Must be the strain . . ."

From somewhere in the town a tower clock tolled the strokes of

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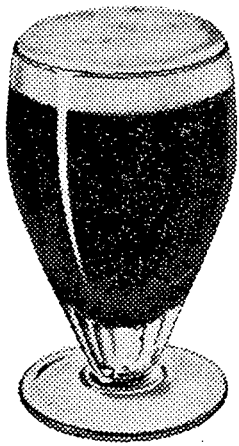

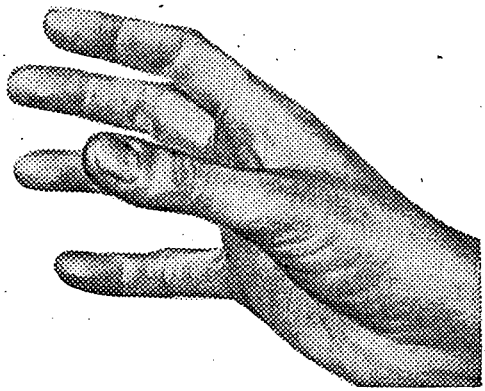

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ten; the door of the theatre opened and Sir Archibald appeared minus gloves and mask, his cap pushed on to the back of his white locks. Instantly he was surrounded.

"Well, sir?"

"Has she had it?"

Sir Archibald blandly waved all queries aside. "Not yet," he said. "We are still waiting. I have come out for a cigarette." The three men in unison pressed smokes and fire upon him. Observing him, Clyde wondered whether the gynaecologist was concealing something from them. Tim was certain he was. The great man did not appear to be entirely at ease. He drew in and swallowed three long drags of smoke, then dropped the cigarette and stifled it with the toe of his boot. "Well," he said, "I'd better be getting along back inside. Not to worry."

Tim commenced to pace up and down, and Felicity noted that at the place where he was walking off his nervousness the carpet beneath his feet was worn thin by several generations of feet similarly agitated. Poor thing—what would happen to Tim while she was occupied with her own delivery?

Then they were all aware that the comings and goings of the nurses and messengers began to increase in tempo. Doors banged somewhat more loudly; feet scurried more quickly; and the almost unbearable atmosphere of mystery and tension was increased by the one-way conversations which were funnelled quite audibly from the switchboard.

The operator appeared to be searching frantically for a piece of equipment with a name which sounded like thermosphygalamometer.

The thermosphygalamometer justified its name by turning out to be a terrifying-looking cabinet on wheels from which protruded tubes, arms, clamps, and compressors, festooned with dials and gauges and columns of active and pulsing coloured liquids.

Major Clyde remarked, "That ought to do the trick if anything can."

Tim, regarding the monster as it trundled past them and vanished through the door of the operating-theatre, groaned, "My God, you shouldn't be seeing that, Felicity."

But Felicity's eyes were shining with excitement as she cried, "But I am absolutely fascinated!"

The lower lip of Mrs. Constance Lovejoy began to quiver and tears came to her eyes. Sergeant Lovejoy laid a comforting hand upon her arm and said, "There now, Constance, don't take on so. It'll be no more trouble to 'er than layin' an egg."

But if so, the egg was a long time coming, for quarter-hours passed in agonising succession with no news from behind the closed door.

To Tim the waiting had become a double torment. For all of Felicity's gallantry and lightheartedness, the passage of the thermosphygalamometer had shaken him badly.

The doors of the operating-theatre opened, this time with swift

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urgency, and Sir Archibald Cruft appeared on the threshold. His white cap was askew on his hair and his surgeon's mask had slipped under his chin. He was worried, and his alarm at once communicated itself to the waiting group as Sir Archibald said curtly, "We're in trouble! There's a blockage."

"Blockage!" repeated Clyde. "What does that mean?"

"Can't you do something?" shouted Tim.

Mrs. Lovejoy emitted a wail of anguish and threw herself into her husband's arms, much to Lovejoy's embarrassment.

"She's not presenting properly," Sir Archibald explained. "She should have been bred much earlier. Special instruments are wanting. The only chance would be a Caesarean."

"Then get on with it, man," ordered Clyde. "Do it."

"What are you waiting for?" cried Tim.

Sir Archibald refused to be flustered. He was still very much in command of the situation.

"We lose the mother if we do," he said. "Unfortunately, there is no other choice."

And suddenly it was comedy no longer, not even to the irrepressible Felicity, and for the first time she experienced doubts with regard to her coming ordeal which up to that moment she had faced with fearless gaiety and calm anticipation. She read the horror in her husband's eyes as the import of what the gynaecologist had told them struck home. He was faced not only with the problem resulting from his job, but she knew

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that in his mind he was transferring this dilemma to himself.

"Which will you have—mother or child—I cannot save both."

"Damn the mother!" snapped Major Clyde. "It's the kid we want."

Mrs. John C. Lovejoy extracted herself from her husband's arms. "Oh no, you don't," she cried. "Don't you dare touch my Amelia."

Desperation had left Tim momentarily speechless, and Felicity fairly ached with sympathy for him.

The voice that brought them all to a kind of shocked standstill belonged to Sergeant Lovejoy. "Look here," he said, "what about letting me have a go?"

"You?" shouted Major Clyde.

"It's my wife's hape, sir," replied Lovejoy, "and if I 'ad 'alf a crown for every one of them creatures I'd 'elped when it was in a bit of difficulty—"

Sir Archibald looked sharply at Lovejoy. "What's that you say? You've been present at births?"

Lovejoy snorted. "Like I said, if I 'ad 'alf a crown—"

"Never mind your half-crowns, man," interrupted Sir Archibald. "Go in then and don't stand there gassing. Get into a surgical gown and cap. The theatre sister will show you how to scrub. Hurry, man—in there!" and he pointed to the door of the operating-theatre.

Lovejoy rose, marched to it with a firm tread, and went through.

Felicity uttered a plaintive little cry, half rose from her chair, and then sat down again with the most peculiar and frightened expression on her face. Quite suddenly there was something timorous and childlike in her looks and voice as she said, "Oh dear, Tim. I don't think I feel very well."

Tim plunged to her side in what amounted almost to a rugby tackle, landing on his knees with his arms about her. "Felicity, darling, what's wrong? What is it?"

It seemed no longer absurd or ridiculous that her husband should be showing every sign of being reduced to dithering panic. She found that she was even glad. It was right that it should be so. She said, "It's—it's just that—I mean, with all the excitement and everything, I think that—"

"Oh, my God," shouted Tim, and disintegrated completely. "Sir Archibald!" he bawled. "Quick! Get Sir Archibald!"

That individual, who was standing no more than two feet behind Tim, said testily, "Yes, yes, I can hear you, you needn't shout! Come on, my boy, pull yourself together and let me have a look." He pushed Tim aside, examined Felicity briefly with no more than a knowing professional glance, and said, "Ah well, here we are. And I must say I'm not surprised. I always thought you were wrong about the date."

At that moment the theatre sister appeared at the door and said, "Dr. Lovejoy is ready and waiting for you, sir."

"What? Who?" said Sir Archibald. "Oh yes, of course;

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I'll be along in a moment. In the meantime take Mrs. Bailey here to Room C and prepare her. I'll look in as soon as I can."

He started for the door only to find his way blocked by Tim. "You'll do what? To hell with these bloody monkeys! You'll look after her right now. She's my wife. You can't leave her!"

Sir Archibald again managed to remain calm and controlled. He was still the leading actor in the drama, now a double one. He said, "Will someone take this lunatic off me and explain the facts of life to him? It will be hours yet before Mrs. Bailey will have any need of me. In the meantime—" he brushed Tim aside, stalked into the operating-theatre and vanished.

If the purpose of a uniform is to make all men alike or designate the kind of service they perform, the surgical cap, gown, mask, and rubber gloves can swallow up the individual inside it more quickly than any other costume, and for the moment Sir Archibald Cruft forgot that it was one Sergeant John Lovejoy, a Royal Artilleryman and Keeper of the Apes, who was inside the garments, and addressed him in the manner of a learned colleague, bandying Latin gynaecological phrases to the effect that the unborn infant on whom Major Clyde, and through him the nation, was basing its hopes of an important and successful psychological warfare gambit, had got itself skew-wiff in the uterus and because of several more unintelligible Latin and medical terms could not survive another three minutes. It was too late practically now even for a Caesarean section.

Sergeant Lovejoy, looking down upon the suffering creature, said, "Gord luv you, sir; you've got 'er wrong end to and top side up to be of any 'elp to 'er. I've seen 'em like this many a time. 'Ere, let me show you, sir."

Swiftly, and with practised hands, he turned the ape round on her stomach and then drew up her legs beneath her, putting his arm down just above the top of her head. "When they're out in the wild, sir, they can get 'old of a branch or a bit of rock for purchase. Now you watch 'er."

Gratefully, Amelia was already clutching the brawny forearm of the Sergeant and was moving her body in a kind of rhythm accompanied by shrill squeals.

"Now what I usually does," continued the Sergeant, "when they gets about this far along is I puts me thumb 'ere—" and he suited the action to the words—"'olding 'er like this, pushing a little, and out she pops. There you are, sir."

And out indeed it did pop: a tiny wet creature with fingers and toes that were almost transparent, and a miniature face that was terrifyingly human.

"Well, I'm blowed," were the exact words of Sir Archibald Cruft, the great gynaecologist. "Dr.— I mean, Sergeant—" he paused in the eulogy he was about to deliver, for the Sergeant was staring down at the body of the monkey which had not yet relaxed and was saying, "'Ello, 'ello."

Sir Archibald too scrutinised the beast. "Dear me," he said,

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" what's this? There's another one in there. Do they ever? "

" Not to my knowledge," replied Lovejoy, " but I 'ave heard of it. But then the second is always stillborn. They ain't got the staying power for it, sir."

" Well, this one isn't going to be," declared Sir Archibald Cruft with a sudden fierceness. " Here, help me. Show me what you did before. We've got to bring this little fellow out alive. The thermosphygalamometer, Sister."

The theatre sister wheeled the contraption over, and now Sir Archibald proceeded to show how and why he was the great man he was. Working surely and deftly, he fastened the various attachments in the proper places to stimulate the blood, oxygen, and sugar supply of the beast, bolstered her heart, took the strain off her pelvis, all the while muttering, " Damnedest technique I ever saw, Sergeant. Absolutely brilliant. We can adapt that to cases of—"

Amelia began to squeak and chitter again, and her small body moved. " Now then," said Sir Archibald, " where was it exactly you put your thumb? "

" Right here, sir, you can feel—"

" That's it," said Sir Archibald exultantly. " I might have spared the Countess of Crite a nasty hour with this. Well—next time. Push, you say! "

" And out she pops."

And out popped the second, alive and identical to the first.

Sir Archibald gave a perfunctory glance and murmured, " Boy and a girl! What more could they want? "

Sergeant Lovejoy regarded Sir Archibald, his eyes above his mask filled with undaunted admiration. " Gord, sir, you've done it! It's never been done before with an ape. Two for the price of one, sir. Major Clyde won't arf be pleased."

Sir Archibald was not ungenerous. " It's your technique, Sergeant," he said, " and when I write a paper on this I shall give it your name."

A short time later the door to the operating-theatre was thrown open, revealing Sir Archibald and Sergeant Lovejoy, still gowned, with the theatre sister.

Sir Archibald's wonderful countenance bore the grand and illuminating smile he reserved for the occasion. " Twins," he announced proudly. " A boy and a girl."

" Not Felicity," quavered Tim Bailey.

" No, Amelia."

It was no more than forty-five minutes later when Sir Archibald appeared, his face once more wreathed in his famous another-Cruft-baby-successfully-brought-into-the-world smile.

Tim, who had been hunched down in his chair, his head buried in his hands, looked up miserably for news of more delay.

" A most remarkable woman indeed," said Sir Archibald. " Never encountered anything like it before in a Prime Ibs. Had

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her baby quietly and without fuss in twenty minutes. Didn't even give us time to get to the operating-theatre. Didn't need to. Astonishing girl. Wish they were all like that."

"Wha—what?" gasped Tim. "Did you say—?"

Sir Archibald nodded.

"A boy," he said. "Mother and son doing fine. Come along, let's have a look at them."

Dazed, Tim followed in the wake of the stately pace of the great man to Room C where Felicity sat propped up in bed, looking as fresh and blooming as an English rose, and ten times more beautiful.

At the side of the bed in a bassinet was something red and squealing, which at first glance caused Tim to recoil from shock. It looked so much more like a monkey than a person. The presence of Sir Archibald was embarrassing, and that of the red thing completely terrifying.

Felicity called to him, "Oh, my poor darling, you look awful. Have you suffered just terribly?"

Tim turned his attention to the red object in the bassinet, and nothing he saw there tended to diminish the panic engendered by the first glimpse. He now looked down into the tiny screwed-up countenance which so very greatly resembled those of the apes who had been his charge.

"But—but," he stammered, "the faces of the others were so *human*."

"Tim," Felicity cried, "tell me, what has happened?"

Major Bailey was still badly rattled. "You—you have had a boy," he said, "there—here it is."

"Oh, my darling," Felicity said, and voiced all of the tenderness and understanding that women have for the ridiculousness of males. "No. I mean Amelia."

"She—she's had twins! When—when old Cruft came out and announced it I thought—"

"Oh, Tim," Felicity cried. "You must have gone through absolute hell. Come here, my poor darling; sit here on the bed and let me hold you and rub your head; you've been through a perfectly frightful time."

To his surprise, Tim found himself sitting exactly where he had been directed and letting it happen to him. But after a while positions were reversed, and Felicity was nestled in his arms where she sighed and said, "Oh, Tim, I'm so happy. I never thought it could happen to me, but it has. I have a real Cruft baby. It's absolutely perfect."

A spark stirred within Tim and was fanned to a sudden glow. "Damn it," he said, "it's mine. All old Cruft did was—"

"Wave his magic wand," Felicity concluded for him. "It's a Bailey baby."

"Yes, yes," said Tim with sudden and strange fierceness. "That's it." He got up and went and looked down in the bassinet. Was it his imagination, or had the red object in it already

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begun to look slightly more human? And had it smiled? . . .

When in June 1945 the announcement of the birth of twin apelets to a Gibraltar Rock ape was made, the effect upon the Germans was exactly what Major Clyde had foreseen. They gave up. The propaganda broadcasts with regard to the apes ceased. The Prime Minister was informed that his orders had been carried out. The crisis was at an end and never again threatened.

Felicity has never regretted her choice of mate, for her husband is a Colonel at Staff College, and a brilliant future is predicted for him. He can write D.S.O., C.B.E. after his name and he is used constantly on the Rock when some new officer is to be stuck with the post, as an example that even such a doubtful office as OIC Apes can be a springboard to greatness.

Five years after the end of the war, Sergeant Lovejoy reached the age of retirement, and with his wife bade farewell to the Army, Gibraltar, and the Barbary apes. They returned to England and, on a holiday visit to Hope Cove where they had first met, they found that the guest house where they had stayed was up for sale. The combined savings of the Sergeant and the competence left his wife by her relatives enabled them to buy this property, carry out the necessary improvements and decorations, and bring it back as a successful year-round holiday hotel.

With Tim Bailey's extraordinary services being recognised with the C.B.E. it is only natural that his right-hand man Lovejoy should win the lower order of B.E.M., and this dignity was conferred upon the ex-Keeper of Apes in a subsequent honours list and celebrated in all the newspapers with extravagant stories and suitable photographs.

But John Lovejoy achieved far greater rewards in a pleasant and contented existence with his wife. They like and respect one another and he has made her a good, kind husband, and for this he has had a most astonishing and unexpected return.

It will be remembered that spinster Constance Boddy had made total abstinence on the part of the Gunner a condition of her yielding to him, and except for the one rousing wing-ding, the last jamboree at the Admiral Nelson, Lovejoy kept his pledge. Well, in these late and approaching twilight years Mrs. Lovejoy closes an eye. On Saturday nights Mr. Lovejoy steals away to the Crown and Anchor and has himself a couple with the boys. He takes Guinness and lime for old times' sake. And on his return home, even though his steps be slightly unsteady, Mrs. Lovejoy sees no evil, hears no evil, and speaks no evil—a truly remarkable and loving woman.

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" Scruffy" by Paul Gallico is published by Michael Joseph

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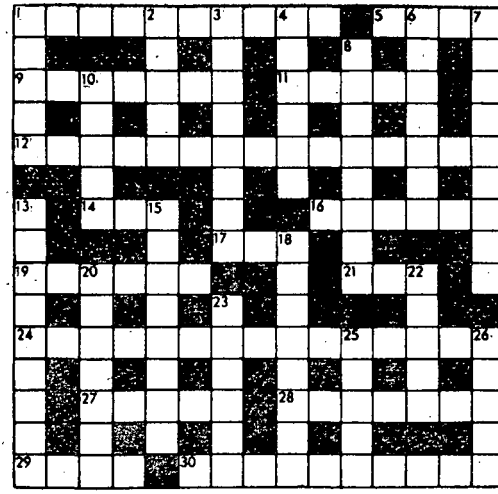
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution on page 25



ACROSS

1 Steps to safety (4, 6).

5 Broken star turns out royal (4).

9 A poor hand could make for poor steak (2, 5).

11 Eliot's land (5).

12 Out on a limb ? (3, 6, 6).

14 For two, perhaps, on the green (3).

16 I am a one, film-wise (6).

17 Quite the reverse of good fish (3).

19 Little Edward mixes remedy to lose weight (6).

21 One of Tennyson's immemorial trees (3).

24 Nine (3, 4, 3, 5).

27 Santa in disguise ? The devil he is ! (5).

28 Perambulator ? Unlikely (4, 3).

29 Area at the top of a crevasse (4).

30 Developed product of 16 (10).

DOWN

1 Make this last (5).

2 Deluded, hasn't got tuppence, so give him a miss (5).

3 This love could produce a skeleton (8).

4 Cosmetic may have an explosive effect (6).

6 One little spot keeps a hundred and fifty in pieces (7).

7 Hoofprint of course! (9).

8 Guess it meets a change (8).

10 Singular slacks and quite the reverse. Mean! (5).

13 Gives mouth to music (9).

15 Unearth (8).

18 We hope it doesn't rule the " unreflecting herd " ! (3, 5).

20 No striptease with her around (7).

22 Soldier has a raincoat round him for a spell (5).

23 Twigs on to it (6).

25 Hamper in the mud? (5).

26 Lightens under pressure (5).

Printed in England by PERCY BROTHERS LTD., THE HOTSPUR PRESS, MANCHESTER, 1, and published on the tenth of each month by FLEETWAY PUBLICATIONS LTD., FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4. Registered for Transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription Rates: Inland, £1 19s. for 12 months, 19s. 6d. for 6 months. Overseas (except Canada), £1 17s. for 12 months, 18s. 6d. for 6 months. Canada, £1 14s. 6d. for 12 months, 17s. 3d. for 6 months. Sole Agents: Australasia, MESSRS. GORDON & GOTCH LTD.; South Africa, CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY LTD.; Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, MESSRS. KINGSTONS LTD. ARGOSY is sold subject to the following conditions, namely, that it shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

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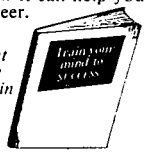

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